Sant Kabir
Life and Philosophy

K. L. Chanchreek

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K.L. Chanchreek

Dr. M. K. Jain

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INTRODUCTION

In the literary world Kabir is known as a devout saint poet, social rebel and reformer. Though he was not much educated but considered to be the most enlightened soul. He was born at a crucial period of Indian history, when all malign influences and divisive forces that has hung over the society and the country were making a havoc among the people.

Through his appealing and articulate vanis and verses he gave call to the masses to rise against dogmatic narrow outlook. He was against all the sanctimonious acts and obscurantism. He was saviour of our cultural heritage and Indianness. He was disillusive and a powerful force against communalists, expansionists; and all sorts of conventionalism, conversions and social rigidities.

In his life time Kabir was greatly harassed and insulted by the orthodox priests and the mullas for his mystic-powerful vision and social ideology.

The legend of his miraculous survival demonstrates his magical and yogic powers.

As per legend, Kabir was accused for his secular philosophy and mystic views by the then King Sultan Sikandar Lodi, and condemned him to death. Three successive attempts were made to execute the sentence. He was first bound and thrown into Ganges, but escaped. In another attempt he was thrown into the blazing fire. Finally he was put in front of a furious elephant to be trampled to death but each time he had a miraculous escape.

His voice was against dehumanization. He was a true deistic and condemned ritualism, priestcraft and in the name of orthodoxy.

Kabir through his mystic poetry preached universalism, equality and unity omnipresent and omnipotent God. He highlighted the

Upanisdic thought in the people's dialect; and exposed the frangibility of the world.

He fervently instructed us to hear the sweet melody which flows from the highest heaven. He assured that godly voice is always resounding within the ears of those human beings who are pious, merciful to the poor and have faith in Him. After the Buddha, Kabir is that giant personality who gallantly proclaimed that both the priests and the mullas create hatred and division in the society on the basics of religion for their own supremacy on ignorant ones.

Kabir showered the nectar of nam-bhakti, Vaisnavism and devotion to formless god, irrespective of caste, creed or colour, which inspired the common men to be united against social odds, orthodoxy and all the oppressive features in the Hindu society. He exposed that the god is within us and it was totally false and wrong notion that God was to be found in the palatial temples and mosques. This rather irritated both the priests and the mullas.

He firmly believed that Vedas, the Purans and the Quran cannot lead to salvation, if you have not realized Him who is all pervading. Holy books and scriptures can provide knowledge and information but not the reality and true nature of the omniscience, omnipresent god, whose message, divine music, blessings and love is constantly resounding within us. Every hymn of Kabir is a treasure trove of God's voice. The sagacious preachings of the great rishis, Bhikkus and Sramanas, Vedantins, Natha Siddhas, Yogis, Saktas, Sufis and Pirs are present in the hymns of Kabir.

Every word of Kabir is holistic, a siddha-mantra.

All his contemporary saints, bhakts and later period nirgunia poets have taken inspiration from his thought. Kabirs mystic hymns leads us to know the reality of God and his creation. It is almost difficult to explain his philosophy, his mystical vision.

To the learned scholars and boasting teachers he is a riddle like personality. But to the common people he is so easily to be understood. Those who ignored him in the medieval period of history, have been ignored by the Indian masses in the new millennium. Kabir is still shining like a sun. He stands firm against all ignorance, hegemony, darkness and disruption.

For litterateurs Kabir is a mystic poet, for social activists a social philosopher of the bhakti cult, a rebel and reformer of all

social ills. But for the Kabirpanthis he is an incarnation, a godly personality, born in a lotus pond on petals in the city of Kashi. In the holy book of the Sikh sect "Guru Granth Saheb", Kabir is a great saint, a noble soul of the saint reformer tradition.

The genuine study of Kabir started soon after the decline of Mughal power and British scholars took great interest in the study of Kabir and his teachings. As Vaudeville has observed :

"Kabir's great voice and remarkable hold on the Northern Indian masses did not pass unnoticed by Western Scholars, who from the end of the eighteenth century, applied themselves to the study of Indian traditions and literature. Their attention seems to have been early attracted by the existence of a well-developed sect bearing his name, the Kabirpanthi sect, who claims to be followers of the panth, shown by Kabir himself."

Kabir is no doubt the foremost champion of Hindu-Muslim unity, later preached and practiced by Akbar. As a neo-Vedantist he promoted the 'Universal Religion', or the 'Religion of Man', opposing superstitions, orthodox Hinduism and Islam. Kabir is the friend of the poorest, Kabir is the philosopher of the people, Kabir is an enlightened sage, known for his fearlessness, high character and loftiness of thought and humanistic vision. He is a pandit among pandits.

British Scholar J.N. Farquhar remarked "that his best utterances are probably the loftiest work in the Hindi language and hundreds of his couplets have laid hold of the common heart of Hindustan."

In Islamic tradition, Kabir was treated as a rebel. The Kazis' and the ruling feudal lords did not like him. But in the later Muslim tradition Kabir like many noble sufis was recognized as a Believer of the unity of God. As Abu'l Fazl, Emperor Akbar's friend and noted chronicler writes in the Ain-e-Akbari :

"Some affirm that the Believer Kabir reposes to this day many authentic traditions are related regarding his sayings and doings. He was revered by both Hindus and Muhammadans for his chatholocity of doctrine and illumination of his mind and when he died the Hindus wanted to burn his body and the Muhammadans to bury it."

In another passage of Ain-e-Akbari, Abu'l Fazl clearly mentions

"So say that at Ratanpur is the tomb of Kabir, the Believer. The portals of spiritual discernment were partly open to him and he discarded the effete doctrines of the time. Numerous verses in the Hindi language are still extant of him, containing important theological truths"

This proves that during Mughal empire Kabir's popularity has increased both as a noble religious soul and social reformer as well as a rebel.

Sixteenth century Persian work of Abdul Haq Dihalwi (Dehalvi) shows that Kabir's verses were already being read or quoted in Sufi circles in Delhi and Agra, and other places...

Probably a mid 17th century work known as "Dabistan-e-Mazahib", ascribed to Muhsin Fani of Kahmir testifies the continuous and growing prestige and popularity of Kabir among Indian Muslims, who were liberal and secular in views as of Akbar.

Another Persian work Khazinat-ul-Asafiya (1868) mentions Kabir as a Sufi.

Italian monk, Padri Marcodella Tomba translated the verses of Kabir in Italian, who arrived in India in 1758 and returned to Rome in 1775. He remarks that Kabir's ideas are fundamentally influenced by Buddhism. His rejection of caste, scripture and Brahmanical practices and rituals had their sources in Buddhism which survived for a long time.

In the last years of the 18th century Dr. J.B. Gilchrist in his 'Hindostance Grammer' mentioned Kabir as a famous Indian sage who lived in the humble condition of a weaver and his sentiments were greatly honoured.

Malcolm in 1812 published his 'Sketch of the Sikhs' and referred to the admired writings of the weaver poet Kabir. There is mention of Kabir in General Harriott's Memoirs on Kabirpanthis published in 1832. Westcott and Grierson also admired Kabir and his hymns. H.H. Wilson also published his research-oriented writings on Kabir in 'Asiatic Researches', in 1828 and 1832, which again appeared in the 'Sketch of the Religious sects of the Hindus.' W. Price published his commentary on Nabhaji's Bhaktamala, which contains narrative of Kabir.

Garcin de Tassy, quoting Harriott, Price and Wilson in his famous Histoire de la Litterature gave an account of Kabir and

his importance in the Indian religious history. W.W. Hunter in his 'Indian Empire' mentions Kabir, though briefly, who lived about the 15th century and had tried to build up a religion that should embrace Hindus and Muslims alike.

A German missionary, E. Trump published his 'Sacred Books of the Sikhs' (1877), which included hymns of Kabir besides other saints. In the end of the 19th century many Christian padris searched spiritual message of Kabir having a Christian ring. In this group of religious leaders and writers were Revd. Prem Chand, Revd. Ahmed Shah, Bishop Westcott, and great linguist George Grierson. In the beginning of the 20th century several European scholars, mostly missionaries published their studies on Kabir. Bishop Westcott's study 'Kabir and the Kabirpanth' came out in 1907 from Christ Mission Press, Kanpur, and this study is very near to Malcolm.

Rabindranath Tagore himself selected one hundred poems of Kabir out of Kshiti Mohan Sen's Kabir collection and translated them into beautiful English in 1914, with an introduction of Miss Evelyn Underhill. This got world wide publicity.

In 1928 the first edition of Kabir-Granthavali, edited by Shyam Sundar Das was published by Kasi Nagri Pracharini Sabha, and its fifth edition published in 1964. Dr. P.D. Barthwal, Dr. H.P. Dvivedi, Dr. R.K. Varma, Pt. Parsuram Chaturvedi and many Indian litterateurs published their popular studies on Kabir.

Many Indian leaders who worked for the uplift of the underprivileged and marginalized sections of the Hindu social order, like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Babu Jagjivan Ram have deep respect for Kabir and his philosophical teachings. These leaders were highly influenced by the Kabirian thought.

Writings of Kabir are taught and studied upto the University level language courses. There is much social awakening among Kabirpanthi communities all over India. The Koli, Kori, Hindu Julaha, Balai, Kabirpanthi treat him as an incarnation. Kabir community and Kabir followers are found world over. In academic circles seminars and workshops are organised on Kabirian philosophy on national and international scale. In Sikh Sangats and Sikh temples world over Kabir songs are recited for promoting peace and equality, brother-hood and unity.

This publication based on earlier researches on Vaisnavism,

Bhakti cult, Sufism and Kabirian literature is a study of Kabir's life and his social-mystic philosophy and different personalities. A number of western and Indian scholars have expressed and analyzed Kabir as a sagacious saint poet, a social rebel, mystic thinker and philosopher who greatly attracted the attention of the masses for religious-cultural synthesis and social transformation. Kabir boldly pointed out the weaknesses of the society and social rigidities created by the orthodox Brahmanical and Islamic religionists.

Kabir was the most liked spiritual leader, philosopher and prolific of all the saints of the bhakti cult during the medieval age. He was at the same time conscious of the problems faced by the masses. In his powerful voice he opposed all the oppressive features of the Hindu social order.

Kabir has a mass appeal in his hymns and his spiritualistic-mystical verses are still quoted and sung in religious assemblies throughout the globe.

For Russian scholars he is a poet of the working class. Historians like Romila Thapar and Zoya Hasan recognise the social cultural importance of Kabir during medieval age and his impact still afresh.

If the Buddha is light of Asia, Kabir is the voice of Asia. His social philosophy, his teachings, his verses and shabads, and his message of unity and equality is more relevant and meaningful in the 21st century. He is a light house for the struggling depressed humanity.

In the mythological language we can call and remember Kabir who is a parijata on earth, the tree of gods from heaven, whose flowers in the shape of his vanis and shabads full of godly fragrance provide us mental peace, inner strength and awakening. In the changed social setting his hymns are accepted as eye-openers, composed and recited six hundred years ago but still afresh and eternal.

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K.L. Chanchreek

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1

VAISNAVISM : ORIGIN AND GROWTH

During 800 AD to 1300 AD, Buddhism practically disappeared from India, when a large number of Buddhist monasteries and educational centres like Nalanda and Taxila were attacked and destroyed by the Arabs. However, Jainism managed to survive, specifically in South. Hindu Temples were also damaged and process of conversion started. By this time the Hindus had accepted the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu. The decline of these two religions Buddhism and Jainism is also linked with the rise and popularity of the devotional cult throughout the country. It was perhaps the most troubled period due to chaos created by the Arab and Afghan invasions. Islamization resulting in mass conversions was a great challenge to Hinduism.

In South India, Alvars contributed a lot to *bhakti* cult. The Vaiṣṇava Acharyas tried to introduce new liberal religious trends in north and encouraged both nirguna and saguna bhakti through local saints who popularised the devotional cult.

The low castes and the poor artisans were the socially and religiously marginalised Hindū stock, who were discouraged from learning as well as worshipping at the temples. The Vaiṣṇavism and *bhakti* cult in northern and western India encouraged the devotional movement attracting preachers and hymn composers and singers who attracted the masses from artisans and peasants class. The God was identified and personified both in form and without form. In form it was *Vishnu* and formless god was a '*nirguna Brahma*'.

Ramanuja disagreed with Shankar's theory that knowledge was the primary means of salvation, whereas Ramanuja's God was

full of love and forgiveness. He was synthesizer between devotional cult and Hindū theology. Ramanuja was not opposed to the excluding of *shudras* from worship in the temples.

We can discuss here the origin and growth of Vaiṣṇavism to understand *bhakti* cult. Learned Indologist Monier Williams published his scholarly work 'Religious Thought and Life in India', during 19th century in which he incorporated explanatory outlines of the important phase of religious thought and life. His *painstaking* research is considered *authentic* and *inspring*.

Explaining the general characteristics of Vaiṣṇavism he observes that : "the intense faith in a personal god is the chief characteristic of Vaiṣṇavism. Of course it is merely the intensity of this faith that distinguishes the worship of *Vishnu* from that of Shiva (Siva), for both Vaiṣṇavism and Shaivism agree dissenting from the vague impersonal Pantheism of Brāhmanical philosophy, whose one God is the substratum of everything and himself nothing. Nor can we wonder that devotion ot Viṣṇu in this two human incarnations, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa (Krishna), became the most popular religion of India. These two heroes were of the kingly or *Kṣatriya* caste, and greatly beloved as popular leaders. It is usual to assert that the *Brāhmaṇs* are the highest objects of worship and honour among the *Hindūs*. This is not the case among the countless adherents of the Vaiṣṇava religion. The mass of the people of India exalt the divine right of kings and the divine right of the government of the day above all other forms of power, and worship every great and heoric leader as an incarnation of the deity.

Yet, with all its popularity, Vaiṣṇavism is not an example of a house at peace within itself. It has split up into various subdivisions, which display no little of the odium theologicum in their opposition to each other. Possibly antagonism of some kind is a necessary condition of religious vitality. At any rate in India all religious systems inevitably break-up into sects, and seem to gather strength and vigour from the process."[1]

"It is not uncommon, indeed, to hear it asserted that Hindūism is rapidly falling to pieces, and destined soon to collapse altogether. One reason given for the doom supposed to be impending over its future is, that it is not a proselyting religion. And the truth certainly is that no stranger can be admitted as a convert to Hindūism either by making any particular confession of faith or by going through any prescibed forms. The only acknowledged mode of ad-

mission is by birth. To become a *Hindū* one must be born a *Hindū*. Yet Hindūism is continually growing within itself. In its tenacity of life and power of expansion it may be compared to the sacred banian-tree, whose thousand ramification, often issuing from apparentely lifeless stems, find their way into walls, undermine old buidlings, or themselves descend to the ground, take root in the soil, and form fresh centres of growth and vitality."

"And it cannot be doubted that one great conservative element of Hindūism is the many-sidedness of Vaiṣṇavism. For Vaiṣṇavism is, like Buddhism, the most tolerant of systems. It is always ready to accomodate itself to other creeds and delights in appropriating to itself the religious ideas of all the nations of the world. It admits of every form of internal development. It has no organized hierarchy under one supreme head, but it may have any number of separate associations under separate leaders, who are ever banding themselves together for the extension of spiritual supremacy over ever-increasing masses of the population. It has no formal confession of faith, but it has an elastic creed capable of adaptation to all varieties of opinion and practice. It has no one Bible—no one collection of writings in one compact volume, like our own Holy Bible, with lines of teaching converging towards one great central truth—but it has a series of sacred books, called *Purāṇas*, each of which professes to be a direct revelation from the Supreme Being, and each of which may be used as an authority for the establishment of almost any kind of doctrine. It can, like Brāhamaism, be pantheistic, monotheistic daulistic, polytheistic. It can, like Śaivism, enjoin asceticism, self-mortification, and austerity. It can, like Śāktism, give the reins to self-indulgence, licentiousness, and carnality. It can, like Buddhism, preach liberty, equality, fraternity; or inclulcate universal benevolence and avoidance of injury to others. It can proclaim Buddha or any other teacher or remarkable man to be an incarnation of Vishṇu. It can even set its face against idolatry, and can look with sympathizing condescension of Christianity itself, or hold it to be a development of its own theory of religion suited to Europeans. It is owing to this all-comprehensiveness of the Vaiṣṇava system that any new doctrine or any new view of old doctrines may be promulgated by any man of originality and ability, with an almost certain prospect of success. And indeed the religious credulity of the inhabitants of India increases in proportion to their unbelief in all political and social innovations.

Broken up as they are into a multitude of separate peoples, few in that country have any desire for national union or intellectual progress. Few wish to leave the path trodden by their forefathers, or deviate from the old indurated ruts. The masses of the various populations can neither read nor write. They care nothing for science. History, biography, and political economy are to them a *terra incognita*. Their whole desire is to be left undisturbed in their time-honoured customs, family traditions, and caste usages."

"One only subject has power to rouse them from their normal condition of mental torpor. That subject is religion. Religion (in close connexion with caste) is ever present to a *Hindū's* mind. It colours all his ideas. It runs through every fibre of his being. It is the very Alpha and Omega of his whole earthly career. He is born religious, and dies religious. He is religious in his eating and drinking, in his sleeping and walking, in his dressing and undressing, in his rising up and sitting down, in his work and amusement. Nay, religion attends him in antenatal ceremonies long before his birth, and follows him in endless offerings for the good of his soul long after death. Let any one appear as an earnest preacher of religion in any assemblage of ordinary *Hindūs*-let him announce that he has come as a messenger from heaven, or even that he is prepared to work miracles in attestation of the truth of his mission, and he is sure of being believed. And if to his other qualifications he adds a character for self-denial and asceticism, he cannot fail to attract disciples; for nowhere in the world are family ties so binding as in India, and yet nowhere is such homage paid to their abandonment. The influence of any new religious leader (*ācārya*) who is known to live a life of abstinence, bodily mortification, and suppression of the passions, is sure to become unbounded, either for good or evil."

"Probably, during the leader's lifetime, he is able to restrain the enthusiasm of his converts within reasonable limits. It is only when he dies that they are apt to push his opinions to extremes never intended by himself. Eventually they develop his teaching into an overgrown unhealthy system, the internal rottenness of which disgusts all sensible men, even among its own adherents. Then some new teacher arises to re-establish purity of doctrine He is, of course, in his turn a man of earnestness and energy, with a strong will, and great powers of persuasion. He collects around him with equal facility a number of followers, and those in their

turn carry his teaching to preposterous lengths.

Hence the conditon of Vaṣṇavism, which depends far more than Śaivism on personal leadership and influence, is one of perpetual decay and revival, collapse and recovery. Its fluctuations resemble those of a vast ocean heaving this way and that in continual flux and reflux.

"It is doubtless true that all human systems are liable to similar alternations. But in India every tendency of humanity seems intensified and exaggerated. No country in the world is so conservative in its traditions, yet no country has undergone so many religious changes and vicissitudes. To follow out in detail the whole drama of Vaiṣṇavism would require volumes. Even the first act presents us with a succession of shifting scenes."[2]

"In all likelihood the primary idea of god Viṣṇu (a name derived from root viṣ, 'to pervade'), permeating and infusing his essence into material objects, was originally connected with the personification of the infinite heavenly space. We know that in the *Ṛig-veda* Viṣṇu is a form of the ever-moving solar orb, and in a well-known hymn (I. 22, 16, 17), still commonly used by the *Brāhmaṇs*, he is described as striding through the seven worlds in three steps, and enveloping the universe with the dust of his beams. A later work, the *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* of the *Ṛig-veda*, opens with the following remarkable statement : 'Fire (*Agni*) has the lowest place among the gods, Viṣṇu the highest; between them stand all the other deities. (Haug's edition, I.)

Elsewhere the god *Viṣṇu* in connected with water. In Manu's law-book (I. 10) the Supreme Spirit is called Nārāyaṇa, as moving on the waters; in harmony with which idea Viṣṇu is often represented in sculptures, images, and pictures as Nārāyaṇa in human form, reposing on the thousand-headed serpent and floating on the ocean.

In the later mythology of Brāhmanism, when the doctrine of the triad of personal gods (*Tri-mūrti*) had been fully developed and Viṣṇu had taken his place as the second person of that triad, he has a less distinctly marked human personality, antecendent to his incarnations, than the god *Śiva*.

To write a biographical account of the god Viṣṇu's life in his own heavenly abode, like the life of his rival *Śiva* (p. 78), would be difficult. The truth is that the development of his human personality, which is really greater than that of any other god in

the *Hindū* pantheon, must be looked for on earth in the forms of *Rāma* and *Kṛishṇa.*

Nevertheless in his antecedent condition as Viṣṇu, this deity has a material character and individuality of his own quite irrespective of his incarnations. He is described as living in *Vaikuṇṭha*—a locality, as we have seen, more inaccessible and less easy to identify with any definite spot on earth than *Śiva's* abode *Kailāsa* (p. 79). He has a wife *Lakṣmī* or *Śrī*, the godess of fourtune and beauty, who is fabled to have sprung, with other precious things, from the forth of the ocean when churned by the gods and demons (see p. 108). And as *Viṣṇu* in his non-*Avatāra* condition lives a life which has fewer features in common with humanity than that of Śiva, so is his wife *Laksmī* less human than *Śhiva's* wife *Pārvatī.* In fact the more human side of both the god and goddess is reserved for their descents in human form—*Viṣṇu* as Rāma and Kṛiṣṇa, Lakṣmī as *Sītā* and *Rādhā.* Nevertheless some details of Viṣṇu's separate personality as distinct from his *Avatāras* may be gathered from the *Purāṇas.* For example, we are told that he has a peculiar auspicious mark (*Śrī-vats*) on his breast. He has four arms, and holds a symbol in each of his four hands; namely, a wheel or circular weapon (*cakra*) called *Sudarsana*, a conch-shell (śaṅkha) called *Pāñcajanya*, a club (*gadā*) called Kaumodakī, and a loutus-flower (*padma*).[3]

Vaiṣṇava Sects

Vaiṣṇavism originated from south borrowed much from Buddhism. It became a liberal sect in north also. Social and political conditions compelled *ācāryas* to be human and say good-bye to the orthodoxy. It was a social revolution.

Another general characteristic of all the Vaisṇava sects is tenderness towards animal life. In this repect Vaiṣṇavism contrasts favourably with Śaivism. No life must be taken by a worshipper of Viṣṇu, not even that of a minute insect, and not even for sacrifice to a deity (as, for example, to *Kālī*), and least of all must one's own life be taken. It is usual for missionaries to speak with horror of the self-immolation alleged to take place under the Car of Jagannātha (Kṛiṣṇa). But if deaths occurs, they must be accidental, as self-destruction is wholly opposed both to the letter and spirit of the *Vaiṣṇava* religion.

Then, of course, the several sects agree in enjoining the use

of the perpendicular coloured marks on the forehead, called Ūrdhva-puṇḍra (described at p. 67). They are supposed to denote the impress of either one or both the feet of *Viṣhṇu*, and to posses great efficacy in shielding from evil influence and delivering from sin. In addition to these frontal marks, most of the sects brand the breast and arms with the circular symbol and conch-shell of Viṣṇu.

Finally, all the sects believe that every faithful and virtuous worshipper of Viṣhṇu is transported to his heaven, called Vaikuṇṭha, or to that of Kṛiṣhṇa, called *Goloka* (instead of to the temporary *Svarga* or paradise of orthodox Brāhmaṇism), and that when once admitted there, he is not liable to be born again on earth. There, according to the merit of his works, he may enjoy any of the three conditions of bliss, *Sālokya*, *Sāmīpya*, or *Sārūpya*. Whether a *Vaiṣṇava* may be supposed capable of achieving the highest condition of beatification—conscious absorption into the divine essence (*Sāyujya*)—depends of course on the philosophical view of the sect to which he belongs. One point requires to be well understood in comparing the *Vaiṣṇava* religion with Christianity—nemely, that God, with *Hindū* Theists, can only be propitiated by works. He may be called merciful, but He only shows mercy to those who deserve it by their actions, and if He accepts faith it is only because this also is a meritorious act. Every man's hope of heaven depends on his own self-righteousness and on the amount of merit he has been able to accumulate during life. We must also bear in mind that although Viṣṇu is supposed to be a Creator as well as a Saviour, yet he is not so in the Christian sense of the word; for all the sects believe in some material cause (*upādana*)—some eternal substance out of which the Universe is formed.

Let us now advert to the principal points of difference between the more conspicuous *Vaiṣṇava* sects, beginning with that founded by the celebrated reformer, Rāmānuja."[4]

1. Rāmānuja and His Sect

"*Rāmānuja*, or as he is often called *Rāmānujācārya*, was born about the twelfth century at Strī (Śrī) *Parambattūr*, a town about twenty-six miles west of Madras. He is known to have studies and taught at Kāñcīpuram (Coñjīvaram), and to have resided towards the end of his life at *Śrī-Raṅgam*, on the river *Kāverī*, near Trichinopoly, where for many years he worshipped Viṣṇu in his character of Srīraṅga-nātha. The distinctive point of his teaching,

according to the *Sarva-darśana* -saṅgraha (translated by Professors Cowell and Gough), was his assertion of the existence of a triad of principles (padārtha-tṛitayam), namely—1. the Supreme Being (*Iṣvara*); 2. soul (*cit*); and 3. non-soul (*a-cit*). *Viṣṇu* is the Supreme Being; individual spirits are souls; the visible world (dṛiśyam) is non-soul. All three principles have an eternal existence distinct from each other."[5]

According to M.M. Agrawal : In his youth he lived at Conjivaram and was a pupil of *Yadavaprakāśa*. He composed the follwoing works : *Vedāntasāra*, *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, *Vedāntadīpa* and commentaries on the *Brahmasūtra* and the *Bhagavadgītā*.

According to Rāmānuja, the Highest Reality is *Viṣṇu*, a personal God, endowed with all auspicious qualities and free from all defects. *Rāmānuja* holds that *Jīva* is knowledge by nature, knower, doer, enjoyer, atomic and so on. According to him, *Jīva* is Viśeṣaṇa of *Brahman*. He speaks of three kinds of non-sentient, viz. *Prakṛti*, *Kāla* and *śuddhatattva*, Rāmānuja explains the relation between *Brahman*, *Jīva* and *Jagat* on the anlogy of the substance-attribute = *Viśeṣya-Viśeṣaṇa*, or soul-body relation = *Śarīrī-śarīra-sambandha*. Hence, he calls his doctrine as '*Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda*' or the doctrine that 'non-duality qualified by duality', or 'the non-duality of the supreme spirit which is qualified by the *Jīva* and *Jagat* as its attributes'. According to him, *bhakti* is the means to liberation. By *bhakti* he does not understand devotion or love, but *upāsanā*. This *bhakti* is based on *jñāna* and arises from six essential prerequisites, viz. *vivek, vimoka, abhyāsa, kriyā, kalyāṇa* and *anavasada*. *Bhakti*, thus, comprises all ethical virtues."[6]

2. Mādhava and His Sect

Agrawal Says : "**Mādhava** lived in the first three quarters of the 13th century (1197-1296), and his birth place is stated to be Kallianpur in the *Upidi Taluka* of the district of South Kanara—perhaps the same as the *Rajatapīṭha* of *Madhvijaya*.

Mādhva's doctrine is purely dualistic = '*Dvaitavāda*', which insists on the absolute and eternal difference between *Brahman*, *Jīva* and *Jagat*. According to *Madhva*, the Highest Reality is *Viṣṇu*, a personal God, who is illuminated with his power—Lakṣmī, possesses an infinite number of qualities. His chief functions are eight: creation, protection, dissolution, controlling all things, giving knowledge, manifestation of himself, involving the individual souls in

the knowledge of the world and deliverance. The individual souls are all distinct from God and distinct from each other individually innumerable, going through a succession of existence and characterised by ignorance or other defects. *Jagat* is created from *Prakṛti*, which is ever distinct from the Supreme soul. *Mokṣa* is attained by the direct knowledge or perception of Hari. Mādhava propounds the five eternal distinction, the clear understanding of which alone can lead to *Mokṣa*, the distinction between God and *Jīva*, between God and *Jagat*, between one *Jīva* and another, between the *Jīva* and *Jagat* and finally betweent one inanimate object and another."[7]

According to Monier Williams sect founded by Mādhva is of great importance in the *Vaiṣhṇav* tradition. As he obsevers :

The next most important of the *Vaiṣhṇava* sects is that of the Mādhvas.[8] They were founded by a Kanarese Brāhmaṇa named Mādhva—otherwise called *Ānanda-tīrtha*—said to have been born about the year 1200 of our era, at a place called *Udupī*, on the western coast (sixty mile North of Mangalore), and to have been educated in a convent at Ananteśvar. His doctrine is commonly called Duality (*Dvaita*), and is well known for the intensity of its opposition to the Non-duality (*Advaita*) doctrine of the great Vedāntist Śaṅkarācārya. The school he founded is sometimes called *Pūrṇa-prajña*—a name also applied to its founder.

In fact the teaching of Mādhva is by some thought to owe no little of its distinctive character to the influence of Christiantiy, which had made itself felt in the South of India before the thirteenth century. No evidence whatever is forthcoming on this subject. Nor has his system really much common ground with Christianity. Nor would it be easy to give a thoroughly exhaustive account of his doctrines. Still their general drift may be correctly gathered from the *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha*, though the points in which he differs from Rāmānuja are rather obscurely stated in that work.

Of course Mādhva, like Rāmānuja, taught that there was only one God, whose principal name was *Viṣhṇu* (Or *Harī*), and who was the one eternal Supreme Being, all other gods being subject to the law of universal periodical dissolution.

'*Brahmā*, *Śiva*, and the greatest of the gods decay with the decay of their bodies; greater than these is the undecaying *Hari*.' (Professeor Gough's translation).

Perphaps the chief distinctive feature of Mādhva's teaching

was that his first axiom asserted categorically that there are two separate eternal principles (instead of three, as asserted by Rāmānuja, p. 119), and that these two are related as independent and dependent, as master and servant, as king and subject. The one is the independent principle, God (identified with *Viṣṇu*), the other is the dependent principle consisting of the human soul, or rather souls, for they are innumerable.

It was Mādhva's unqulifed denial of the unity of the Supreme and human spirits which made him the opponent of the followers of Śaṅkara.

The Vedāntists maintained, as we have seen, that the difference between one thing and another and between one soul and another was wholly illusory and unreal. Mādhva affirmed that a real and inextinguishable duality was to be proved both by perception and by inference.

'The Supreme Lord,' said Mādhva, 'differs from the individual soul because he is the object of its obedience. A subject who obeys a king differs from that king. In their eager desire to be one with the Supreme Being, the followers of Śaṅkara lay claim to the glory of his excellence. This is a mere mirage. A man with his tongue cut off might as well attempt to enjoy a large plantain.'

Again, according to Mādhva the *Vedic* text, 'This is Self—That art thou,' point to similarity, not identity.

'Like a bird and the string; like the juices of various trees; like rivers and the sea; like fresh and salt water; like a robber and the robbed; like a man and his energy; so are soul and the Lord diverse and for ever different.'

Nor have these two principles a qualified unity comparable to the union of soul and body, as affirmed by Rāmānuja. They are absolutely distinct. With regard to the visible world, he taught that its elements existed eternally in the Supreme Being, and were only created by Him in the sense of being shaped, ordered and arranged by His power and will. Practically he seems to have asserted three principles quite as plainly as Rāmānuja did; for his doctrine was that when once the world had emanated from the Supreme essence it remained a distinct entity to all eternity. 'There is a difference,' he affirmed, 'between human souls and God, and a difference between the insentient world (*jaḍa*) and God.' Probably, like Bishop Berkeley, he saw the difficulty of proving the existence of matter externally to the mind, and therefore contented himself

with asserting two distinct principles, God and the human soul. In short, his dogma was that as the visible world emanated from God it was not to be distinguished, as an original principle, from God, and was not even as distinct as soul and body, though when once produced it remained as distinct from its Producer as an effect from its cause.

According to Mādhva the Supreme being is to be honoured in three ways—by naming, by worship, and by branding.

The act of naming (*nāma-karaṇa*) is performed by giving a child one of the thousand names of Viṣṇu—such as *Keśava*—as a memorial of his dedication to the service of the god.

The act of worship is threefold :—(1) with the voice—by veracity, right conversation, kind words, and repetition of the *Veda*; (2) with the body—by giving alms to the poor, by defending and protecting them; (3) with the heart—by mercy, love and faith. This is a mere repetition of the old triple division of duties, according to thought, word, and deed.

With regard to the rite of branding (called *aṅkana*), the Mādhva sect, like the Rāmānujas and other Vaiṣṇavas, lay great stress on marking the body indelibly with the circular discus and shell of Viṣṇu. They firmly believe that it is the duty of Vaiṣhṇavas to cary throughout life a memorial of their god on their persons, and that such a lasting outward and visible sign of his presence will help them to obtain salvation through him.

'On his right arm let the Brāhmaṇ wear the discus, on his left the conch-shell!'

Monier Williams further says, when I was at Tanjore I found that one of the successors of Mādhva had recently arrived on his branding-visitation. He was engaged throughout the entire day in stamping his disciples and receiving fees from all according to their means.

Texts are recited at the time of branding, and in Sāyaṇa-Mādhva's time the following prayer was said :—'O Discus (*Sudarśana*), brightly blazing, effulgent as ten million suns, show unto me, blind with ignorance, the everlasting way of Viṣhṇu. Thou, O Conch-shell,aforetime sprangest from the sea, held in the hand of Viṣhṇu adored by all the gods, to thee be adoration.' (*Sarva-darśaṇa-saṅgraha*, Cowell and Gough, p. 92.).

I learnt, too, that no less than eight Ācāryas, each of whom is established with his disciples in different monosteries with temples

attached, claim to be successors of Mādhva. There are, however, only two principal religious parties among the Mādhvas. No doubt these quarrel over their Shiboleths, but not, I believe, with as much bitterness as the two divisions of Rāmānujas.

The frontal mark of all the Mādhvas is the same, consisting of two thin vertical lines meeting below in a curve, like that of the *Vada-galai* Rāmānujas. But a central black line is generally made with the charcoal taken from incense burnt before the idols of Viṣṇu.

So much for the doctrines of two sects which, from their having much common ground with Christianity, are worthy of especial attention. Perhaps Mādhva's system is the more interesting in its relation to European thought, but his Theism, like that of Rāmānuja and of every other *Hindū* Theistic system, differed widely in many important points from the 'Theism of Christianity, especially in making God, the substantial as well as efficient cause of the visible world.[9]

3. Vallabha and His Sect

"The third great Vaiṣṇava sect is that founded by *Vallabha*, or as he is commonly called Vallabhācārya, said to have been born in the forest of *Campāraṇya* about the year 1479. He was believed to have been an embodiment of a portion of Kṛiṣṇa's essence, and various miraculous stories are fabled about him. For instance, his intelligence is alleged to have been so great that when he commenced learning at seven years of age, he mastered the four Vedas, the six systems of Philosophy, and the eighteen *Purāṇas* in four months.

After precocity so prodigious he was able at the age of twelve to formulate a new view of the Vaiṣṇava creed, but one which was to a certain extent derived from a previous teacher named Viṣṇu-svāmī. Soon he commenced travelling to propagate his doctrines. When he reached the court of Kṛiṣṇadeva, King of Vijayanagar, he was invited to engage in a public disputation with a number of *Smārta Brāhmaṇs*. In this he succeeded so well that he was elected chief *Ācārya* of the Vaiṣṇavas. He then travelled for nine years through different parts of India, and finally settled in Benares, where he composed seventeen works, among which was a commentary on the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. This last work, especially its tenth book-descriptive of the early life of Kṛiṣṇa—is the chief

authoritative source of the doctrines of the sect. Vallabhācārya's view of the Vaiṣnava creed has been called *Puṣhṭi-mārga*, the way of eating, drinking, and enjoying oneself. But in real fact he simply discountenanced asceticism as a mode of commending man to God. He maintained that worship of the Deity need not be accompanied with fasting, self-mortificatication, and suppression of the passions, but that the natural appetites were intended to be gratified, and the good things of this world to be enjoyed.

In philosophy Vallabha's opinions appear to have resembled those of Rāmānuja, though he is said to have had a greater leaning towards pure *Vedāntism*. He is known to have died at Benares; but, according to his followers, was transported to heaven while performing his ablutions in the Ganges.

His followers are numerous in Bombay, Gujarat, and Central India, particulary among the merchants and traders called *Baniyas* and *Bhātiyas*. He left behind him eighty-four principal disciples, who disseminated his doctrines in various directions. But the real successor to his *Gādī* (*gāddī*) or chair was his second son, Viṭṭhalnātha sometimes called Gosāinjī from his having settled at Gokul, Kṛṣṇa's abode near Mathura. This Viṭṭhalnāth had seven sons, each of whom established a *Gādī* in different districts, especially in Bombay, Kutch, Kāṭhiāwāḍa, and Mālwa.The influence of Vallabhācārya's successors became so great that they received the title *Mahārāja*, 'great king,' the name *Gosāin* (for *Gosvāmin*—lord of cows—an epithet of Kṛishṇa) being sometimes added.

As was naturally to be expected, his followers exaggerated his teaching, especially in regard to his non-ascetical view of religion. They have been called 'the Epicureans of India.' Their spiritual leaders, the *Mahārājas*, dress in the costliest raiment, feed on the daintiest viands, and abandon themselves to every form of sensuality and luxury."[10]

According to M.M. Agrawal "Vallabha a Tailaṅga Brāhmaṇa lived at Vṛndavan and Mathurā. His doctrine is called '*Śuddhādvaita*; i.e. the unity of Brāhmaṇa which is pure and free from *Māyā*. Thus *Jiva* and *Jagat* are same as Brahma, without involving any idea of *Māyā*.

To Vallabha, *Brahman* is one, eternal, omniscient, omnepotent, possessed of an infinite number of qualities and essentially of the nature of *Saccidānanda*. It is Śuddha—pure, *i.e.* never contaminated by connection with *Māyā*. It is possessed of *aiśvarya*. Brahma mani-

fests itself at its own will, as *Jīva* or *Jagat*, simply for the purpose of sport, without undergoing any change in essence, as when, for instance, a serpant forms itself into coils. Brahma has three forms : (i) *Ādhidaivika*—the highest divine form as Kṛṣṇa or Puruṣottama, attainable by a *bhakta*,(ii) *ādhyātmika*—the *akṣara* form, in which all the attributes have become non-manifiest and which alone is attainable by a *jñānin*, and (iii) the *antaryāmin* form as seen in the different *avatāras* of *Viṣṇu*. The relation between *Brahma*, the *Jīva* and the *Jagat* is one of pure identity, one that exists between a part and the whole. For Vallabha, it is non-difference alone that is real, while all difference is simply for the sake of sport, in opposition to both Rāmānuja and Nimbārka. The *mokṣa*, which consists in the absolute cessation of all misery and the experiencing of the bliss which was observed in the *saṁsārāvasthā*, can be attained by two means—*bhakti* and *jñāna*. Of these, the *bhakti* is superior, since it leads to the *sākṣātkāra* of Kṛṣṇa, in which the *ānandāṁśa* is at its best; while the *jñāna* is inferior, as it leads to the realisation of the *akśara Brahman* (Brahma) where the ānandāmśa is of an inferior order. *Bhakti* is of two degrees, *maryādābhakti* and *puṣṭibhakti*. In the former, a *bhakta* attains *mokṣa* by the practice of *sādhanās* on his own part. In the latter, a *bhakta*, without having recourse to any *sādhanās*, depends upon nothing but pure and simple love of *Bhagavān*: his goal is only the service of *Hari*; his highest pleasure is to become one of the friends of *Hari* and to sport with Him. This *Puṣṭibhakti* is the privilege of only him whom *Bhagavat* is pleased to favour; it begins with *Prema* which removes a liking for anything but *Hari*, and passing through *āsakti* which produces a positive aversion to objects not connected with Hari, culminates in *vyasana* or entire devotion to *Hari*."[1]

4. Caitanya and His Sect

"The fourth principal sect of Vaiṣṇavas is found in Bengal. They are the followers of a celebrated teacher named Caitanya, and their precepts and practices have a close community with those of the Vallabhācāryans as already described. The biography of Caitanya, as given by native writers, is, as usual, chiefly legendary. Only scattered elements of truth are discoverable amidst a confused farrago of facts, fiction, and romance. What respect, indeed, for chronological or historical accuracy can be expected in a people who are firmly convinced that their own existence and that of every

one else is an illusion?

I believe, it is pretty certain that Caitanya was born at Nadīya (= Navadvīpa) in Bengal in the year 1485 of our era, two years after Luther in Europe. His father was an orthodox Brāhmaṇa named Jagannātha Miśra. His mother was the daughter of Nīlāmbara Cakravartī. Since Caitanya is held to have been an incarnation of Kṛiṣṇa various prodigies are described as having marked his first appearance in the world. He was thirteen months in the womb. Then soon after his birth, at the end of an eclipse, a number of holy men (among whom was his future disciple *Advaita*) arrived at the house of his parents to do homage to the new-born child, and to present him with offerings of rice, fruits, gold and silver. In his childhood he resembled the young Kṛiṣṇa in condescending to boyish sports (*līlā*). Yet his intellect was so acute that he rapidly acquired a complete knowledge of Saṁskṛta grammar and literature. His favourite subject of study was the Vaiṣṇava bible consisting of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, and *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Yet, Caitanya, notwithstanding his devotion to religious study, did not shrink from what every *Hindū* believes to be a sacred obligation—the duty of marrying a wife, and becoming a householder (gṛihastha). He even married again when his first wife died from a snake-bite. At the age of twenty-five (A.D. 1509) he resolved to abandon all worldly connexions, and give himself upto religious life. Accordingly, like Vallabhācārya and at about the same period, he commenced a series of pilgrimages. His travels occupied six years, and he is known to have visited some of the most celebrated shrines of India, especially those of Benares, Gayā, Mathurā, Śrīraṅgam, and ultimately the temple of Jagannātha at Purī in Orissa.

Having thus prepared himself for his mission, he addressed himself to the real work of preaching and propagating his own view of the Vaiṣṇava creed. It is noteworthy that just about the time when Luther was agitating the minds of men in Europe, Caitanya was stirring the hearts of the people of Bengal. After making many convert he seems to have appointed his two most eminent followers, Advaita and Nityānanda, to preside over his disciples in that part of India. He himself settled for twelve years at Kaṭak in Orissa. There he lived for the rest of his life in close proximity to the great temple of Jagannātha, and contributed to the reputation of the shrine by his presence at the annual festivals.

His success as a preacher was remarkable. Even his enemies

were attracted by the persuasiveness of his manner and the magnetic power of his eloquence. The lower classes flocked to him by thousands. Nor was their admiration of him surprising. The first principle he inculcated was that all the faithful worshippers of Kṛṣṇa (= *Viṣṇu*) were to be treated as equals. Caste was to be subordinated to faith in Kṛṣṇa. 'The mercy of God,' said Caitanya, 'regards neither tribe nor family.'[12]

According to M.M. Agrawal "Caitanya adopts the doctrine of '*acintyabhedābheda*'. His Views were elaborated only by his disciples in their works. Baladevavidyābhūṣaṇa, the one of his followers, wrote a commentary on *Brahmasūtras* namely '*Govindabhāṣya*' in support his doctrine of *acintyabhedābheda.*

Caitanya and Nimbarka

Like Harivyāsadevā, a Nimbārkist, Baladeva admits of five *tattavas*, namely, *Iśvara, Jīva, Prakṛti, Kala* and *Karman*. According to Baladeva, Srīkṛṣṇa accompanied by Rādhā, is himself the ultimate reality. He is *nirguṇa*, free from the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti*, viz. *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* and *saguṇa*, being the source of all auspicious attributes. He has three powers, viz. *parāsakti*, *aparāśakti* and *avidyāśakti*. Through the *aparāśakti*, and *avidyāśakti*. He creates the universe of *cit* and *acit* and through His *parāśakti* which is of three-fold, viz. *saṁvit*, *sandhinī*, and *ahlādinī*. He has knowledge, existence and bliss. Owing to the identity of substance and attributes, the power and attributes of *Brahman* are identical with *Brahman* just as the serpent and its coil and the sun and its lusture. *Brahman* is both the material cause and the efficient cause of the universe. There is the relation of difference and non-difference between the cause and the effect as the power and powerful. Like Nimbārka, Baladeva holds that *Jīva* is by nature knowledge as well as knower, atomic, doer, enjoyer, and infinite; depends on Hari in bondage as well as in salvation. Baladevas view of *Jagat* too is very similar to that of Nimbārka. He holds that *Jagat* is an effect and power of *Brahman*. Baladeva explains the relation between *Brahman*, *Jīva* and *Jagat* like Nimbārka. According to him, the mutual difference in nature and concept of *Brahman*, *Jīva* and *Jagat* is obvious. In reality there is mutual non-difference. Like Nimbārka, Baladeva admits only the *Videha-mukti* and not Jīvan-mukti. Both Nimbārka, and Baladeva emphasise *mādhurya-pradhān-bhakti*."[13]

According to Romila Thapar : A Bengal school-teacher, Caitanya (1486-1533), became a devotee of Kṛṣṇa after experiencing a strange hysterical trance. He held devotional meetings where hymns were sung and the meaning of *Vaiṣṇava* belief was expounded. He travelled through the country inspiring people with *Vaiṣṇava* teaching through the cult of Rādhā and Kṛishna. Caitanya was concerned almost solely with bringing *Vaiṣṇava* teaching to as many people as possible, and he was motivated by purely religious feelings.

Another group sought a retreat in their devotion, and to them all that mattered was self-abnegation in an attempt to discover God. Everything was to be subordinated to this single aim. Such was the message of the songs of Mīrābāī, the sixteenth-century Rajput princess who became a wandering mendicant composing verses on her love for Kṛṣṇa; or of Sūrdās, the blind poet of Agra; and in the mystical verses of Lalla, who lived in Kashmir and dedicated her songs to the god Śiva. [14]

No doubt, Caitanya was popular amongst the general masses, poor peasants and artisans of Bengal and Orissa who were attracted to his teachings.

Caitanya and Nimbarkist have some similarity. As Nimbark believed that "The relation between *Brahman*, on the one hand and the *Jīvaand* the *Jagaat* on the other, is the relation of natural difference and non-difference (*Svābhāvika-bhedābhedavāda*). The Jīva is neither absolutely different from the *Brahman* nor absolutely non-different from him, but it is a part of *Brahman*, and the *Brahman* is the whole of the *Jīva*. Thus, the *Jīva* is by nature different from *Brahman* predicated to be the whole and the store of attributes like omniscient and the rest while it is predicated to be a part, as is subject to bondage and salvation. But it is yet non-different from *Brahman* as its existence and activity are under control of the whole. On the other hand, there is a natural relation of difference and non-difference between *Jīva* and *Brahman* is salvation too. Thus the freed *Jīva* is entirely non-different from the Brahman being existence-cognition-bliss is essence. But the freed *Jīva*, too is different from the *Brahman* in two repsects. In the first place the freed Jīva is atomic in size, while *Brahman* is all-pervasive. And in the second place, the freed *Jīva*, though similar to *Brahman*, yet cannot possible be the lord of all the sentient and the non-sentient, their creator, their supporter, their destroyer all pervasive

and so on, which *Brahman* possesses fully and eternally. In the very same manner, there is the relation of difference and non-difference between *Jagat* and *Brahman*. *Brahman* is of the nature of all-pervading, non-gross, omniscient, while the *Jagat* is inanimate and gross. Thus the mutual different of the *Jagat* and *Brahman* is distinctly established. The doctrine of non-difference between the *Jagat* and *Brahman* is explained by the illustration of the ornaments. The ear-ring is different from the bracelet in name and shape simply on account of *Kuṇḍalatta* and *Kaṭakattva*, but is also non-different so far as gold in concerned. Thus, the doctrine of Nimbārka has very much in common with that of Rāmānuja, both regard the difference as well as the non-difference as real. But, for Nimbārka, difference and non-difference are not the same level, they co-exist and have the same importance, while for Rāmānuja, non-difference is the principal; it is qualified by difference, which is thus Subordinate to it.

According to Nimbārka, *Mokṣa* means becoming like the lord = *bhgavad-bhāvāpatti, i.e.* attaining similarty—*sāmya* with Him in nature and attributes, and it is due to the grace of the Lord. But the attainment of the nature of *Brahman* is only one element in *Mokṣa* and not the whole of it. The other and equally important element is the attainment of one's own real and essential nature = *ātma-svarūpalābha* as well. *Mokṣa*, thus, also implies full development of one's own individuality. There are four *sādhanās* or means to *Mokṣa*, viz. *Karman, Vidyā, Upāsanā, prapatti* and *Gurūpasatti. Karmans* by themselves do not lead to *mokṣa* directly, yet they are not useless, because, if performed conscientiously in a proper spirit, in accordance with one's caste and stage of life, they give rise to *Vidyā* which is a means to *mokṣa*. *Vidyā* means not mere 'Knowledge' but 'meditative knowledge', *i.e.* knowledge ending in meditation. *Vidyā* is not a subsidiary factor of Karman (*Karmāṅga*), but is an independent means. *Upāsanā* means 'meditation' being of the form of contemplation (*dhyāna*). Meditation is to be carried on in a sitting posture. There is no particular rule regarding the place of meditation the only requisite being that meditation should be practiced in a place which helps concentration of the mind. Meditation is to be carried on not off and on, but continuously as long as life lasts. Meditation, like knowledge, brings about destruction of all Karmans and leads to *mokṣa Prapatti* means complete resignation or self-surrender to the Lord. Self-surrender

consists in dedication of oneself with one's dependents and property to the Lord. Being one of the forms of *Vidyā prapatti* or *nyāsavidyā* is one of the most effective to mokṣa. *Gurūpasatti*, as the name implies, means complete self-surrender to a *guru* or spiritual preceptor and not directly to the Lord Himself. The *guru* is the intermediary between the *Jīva* and the Lord, and leads the former to the latter. *"Jīva-Guru-Hari"*—this is the eternal secret of all truth. That is *Gurūpasatti* means offering one's self to the Lord through the guru. *Gurupastti* is the best of all sūdhanās, involving, as it does every other means—*Karman*, *Vidyā* and *Upāsanā*."[15]

Importance of Reformative Vaiṣṇavite Sect

On the importance of minor Vaiṣṇavite sects and reformatory theistic movements Monier Williams further says :

"We cannot quit the subject of Vaiṣṇavism without giving some account of its more important minor sects, as well as of certain reforming theistic movements which may be said to have grown out of it. We may begin with the sect founded by Nimbārka."

"This is perhaps one of the oldest of the known minor sects. Its founder Nimbārka or Nimbāditya, whose followers are sometimes called Nīmānandīs, sometimes Nīmāvats is held to have been identicai with the astronomer Bhāskarācārya,who flourished about the twelfth century. The poet Jayadeva, who is also supposed to have lived in the twelfth century, may have been his disciple. If so, it is certain that the disciple did more than his master to promote the doctrine of devotion of Kṛṣṇa. In Jayadeva's mystical poem, called the Gīta-govinda (compared by some to our Song of Solomon), are described the loves of Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs (wives and daughters of the Cowherds), and especially of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, as typical of the longing of the human soul for union with the divine.

Others again believe Nimbārka to have an actual incarnation of the Sun-god, and maintain that he derived his name of 'Nimb-tree-Sun' from having one day stopped the course of the sun's disk, dislodged it from the heavens, and confined it for a brief season in a *Nimb* (*Nīm*) tree. According to *Hindū* ideas, this remarkable miracle was worked for no unworthy or insufficient purpose. It enabled Nimbārka to offer food just before sunset to a holy guest whose religious vows prevented his eating after dark.

No noteworthy doctrines distinguish Nimbārka's creed, except, perhaps, that his followers, who are not very numerous, are

particular to worship the goodess Rādhā in conjuction with Kṛṣṇa. So was the creed of Caitanya.

5. *Rāmānanda and his Sect*

Rāmānanda is said to have been born in the thirteenth century. The sect founded by him in the fourteenth century has many adherents in Gangetic India, especially around Mathura Vrandavan and Agra. They are often called *Rāmānandīs* or *Rāmavats* and are sometimes confounded with the Rāmānujas, the fact being that Rāmānanda was probably one of Rāmānuja's disciples. The Rāmānanda *Vaiṣṇavas*, however, have distinctive doctrines of their own. They worship Viṣṇu under the form of Rāma (the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa*) either singly or conjointly with his wife *Sītā*, and they are not, like the Rāmānujas, hyper-scrupulous about the privacy of their meals. Their favourite book is the *Bhakta-mālā* of Nābhājī—a work interesting for its biographies of certain *Vaiṣṇavas* and adherents of the sect, among whom are included two well-known poets, Sūrdās and Tulsīdās. The former was blind. He wrote a vast number of stanzas in praise of Viṣṇu, in simple sweet Brajbhasa and is regarded as a kind of patron of blind men, especially if they roam about as wandering musicians.

Tulsīdās, whose verses are to this day household words in every town aand rural district where the *Hindī* language is spoken, ranks as a poet of higherorder. He was born near Citrakūṭa about A.D. 1544, and settled at Benares, where he became an enthusiastic worshipper of Rāma and Sītā. His *Hindī* poem in simple rustic Avadhi, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, or history of Rāma, is no mere translation of Vālmīki's great work. It has all the freshness of an independent and original composition. He died about 1624.

But Rāmānanda is chiefly noted for his twelve immediate disciples, the most celebrated of whom were Kabīr, Pīpā, and Ravidās. Of these again by far the most remarkable was Kabīr. He was an enthusiastic reformer, who founded a distinct theistic sect; to be presently noticed. Let us first, however, conclude our description of strictly Vaisṇava sectarianism by giving some account of the comparatively modern Vaiṣṇava sect founded by Svāmī-Nārāyaṇa. This sect is worthy of a full notice, both because it affords a good example of the best aspect of modern Vaiṣṇavism. and because the efforts of its founder to deliver the system of Vallabhācārya from the corrupting influences of the profligate

Mahārājas is worthy of all praise.[16]

The Jīva is knowledge by nature, dependent on *Hari* and capable to be associated with the dissociated from a body atomic, different in different bodies, and a knower ; and Medieval saints and *bhaktas* were influenced by his teachings who held that all institutional religion was an empty philosophy. *Gorakhanatha donounced caste barriers, sectarianism, and ritualism and emphasized ultimate truth, the Reality could be experienced by direct mystical intutiton. He involved lower castes and initiated them in Nātha tradition. From Kabīra to Nānak the influence of Gorakhanātha is visible in a very big way who stood for equality and denounced idolatry.*

In later times his mystical and yogic thought was highly philosophized as a system which was more near to Buddhism.

Nātha Tradition

Gorakhanatha was born earlier to Kabir for students of spiritual and religious history of India the philosophy of Gorakhanātha is still a theme of great attraction. Litterateurs have attempted to interpret the impact of his teachings available in popular dialects. Gorakhanātha is undoubtedly one of the forgotten teachers of *Bhakti* movement, and even though his influence on India's religious life is wide spread. He is remembered, quoted and respected in our social life.

"It stands to reason that Gorakṣa,—Gorakhanātha as he is popularly known,—had a most powerful personality which profoundly impressed those who came in contact with him. He probably travelled wide; in any case, his fame travelled wider. There are number of places spread all over northern India associated with him and his disciples. There are legends, some of them of very doubtful historical authenticity, which have now become part of the traditional folk-lore of the people. Evidence of the place which *Gorakṣa* occupied in popular estimation comes from another and rather unexpected quarter. The followers of some of the Saints who followed him centuries later apparently felt that the reputation of their Master would not be placed at a sound footing unless he was shown to have been a greater man than *Gorakṣa*. Stories were, therefore, invented of disputations between *Gorakṣa* and the founder of their own school. The discussions were genrally verbal, but they were not unoften accompanied by an overt or veiled display of

ocult power. *Gorakṣa* was, of course, invariably worsted in all such contest. There are many references to such contests in works attributed to Kabīra and Nānak. Of course these great men had no hand in the authorship of these compositions, which are obvisouly the work of their followers, remarkable more for their devotion than common sense. The contemptuous disregard of time which they display is breath-taking. The philosophical content of such compositions is elementary and their reference to Yogic experience not at all profound. But while they do not enhance the reputation of men like Kabīra and Nānak, who, by the way, do not stand in need of such spurious support, they certainly indicate the esteem in which Gorakṣa's memory was held by the people several centuries after his disappearance; no one could easily be accepted as a great saint unless he was proved to be superior to Gorakṣa."[17]

"No doubt the story of the Nātha School, of which Gorakṣa was such a distinguished representative, is an important chapter in the history of India's spiritual development. The *Tāntriks* were followed in course of time by the *Sādhs*, the *Siddhas* and the *Nāthas* and the succession was taken up later by the *Santa-mata*. In a sense, none of these schools brought any absolutely new message. What they preached and practised were simply variations and derivatives of lessons which have been handed down from the most ancient times. There were apparently two schools of religion and spirituality in *Vedic* times which may roughly be called the orthodox and heterodox. The orthodox school, further, functioned in two forms which may be called the exoteric and the esoteric. *Karma Kāṇḍa*, the performance of *Vedic* sacrifices, was the concern of the former, while the latter concerned itself with *Yoga* and philosophy. There was no conflict between the two; they complemented and supplemented each other. Those who belonged to the unorthodox school were called *Vrātyas*. They spurned ritual, did not follow many of the conventions of the *Vedic* society and were given to esoteric disciplines. All medieval and present-day Hindū religious and philosophical thought and spiritual discipline stemmed from these ancient schools.

The Veda declares "*Ekaṁ Sat, Viprā bhudhā vadanti*",—The Absoute Reality is One, the wise call it by many names; and "*Sarvani khalu idaṁ Brahma*",—all this is verily *Brahma*. It is difficult for philosophy to go beyond Absolute Monism. The only possible alternative is Absolute Negation, and this pas posited by Buddhism.

Almost all prominent schools of Hindū thought are variants of the theme of Monism. As for spiritual discipline, the ancient word is *Yoga*, and all the various forms of spiritual practice adopted at different times are really forms of *Yoga*. Even *Bhakti* which prides itself on being something utterly unique and different and claims to offer a straighter road to the ultimate goal of human existence is, in reality, to the extent that it is a genuine spiritual discipline, only *Yoga* with a new name.

The various schools—the *Tantra, Sādha, Siddha, Nātha* and *Santamata*,—disown all connection with one another or with anything that historically preceded them. Such a position is untenable or is the product of ignorance and blind prejudice. Each new school has not received a new commission directly from God in one of His manifestations : each, in fact, learnt much from its predessors and passed on the torch to its successors. The core of truth, which each cherishes, is *sanātana*, old as time itself. What is new is the expression of it which varies with place and time and circumstances, created by political and other external factors."[18]

"The founders of the *Nātha Samparadāya* did not propound a new system of philosophy. In this they were at one with the *Sādhas* and the *siddhas* who had preceded them and the *Santamata* which may be considered to have succeeded them. The *Tāntrikas* had a philosophical doctrine worked out in great detail; the others from the study of their available literature, to have covered the whole gamut from the Absolute Monism of Śaṅkarācrya to the *Visiṣtādvaita* of *Rāmānuja* with *Śuddhādvaita* of Vallabha, somewhere in between, according to personal taste and inclination. But while they did not bother themselves much about a clear exposition of philosophical theory and engage in hair-splitting discussion about subjects which really transcend reason, they paid the greatest attention to spiritual discipline, the practice of *Yoga*. Success in *Yoga* demands and unblemished character, continence and denial of all pleasures of flesh, withdrawal from the distractions of the world, and no one can deny that the fathers of the Nātha school practised these virtues to an extraordinary degree. They were recognised as great adepts in *Yoga* and credited with the development of those so-called occult powers which the practice of *Yoga* unfolds. They were objects of universal reverence coupled with awe. A school of this kind could command respect, but it could not become popular. Its doctrines and disciplines would naturally

be confined to an elite; the people at large could not be expected to live that life of austerity and self-denial which the practice of *Yoga* demands."[19]

"It would not be inopportune to say a few words here about *Yoga*. The Nāthas are generally reputed to be exponents of *Haṭha-Yoga*, about which a good deal of misconception prevails. We hear to-day about different kinds of *Yoga* :—*Rāja-Yoga, Haṭha-Yoga, Jñāna-Yoga, Laya-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga* and *Karma-Yoga*. These are all modern terms. They were not known to ancient *Yogis* and, if some of them occur at all in old literature, their use is purely incidental and not indicative of a separate and exclusive technique. The standard text-book on *Yoga*, Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtra*, makes no mention of them. Certain aspects of the practice of *Yoga* have been need lessly apotheosized and elevated to the false dignity of separate sciences, without paying heed to their inter-relations. The object of the practice of *Yoga* as defined by Patañjali is चित्त वृत्ति निरोधः (*Cittavṛtti-nirodhaḥ*) which automatically result in स्वरूपे अवस्थानम् (*Swarupe avasthānam*) of the द्रष्टा (*Drasṭā*). The Ego having realised itself becomes established in its own ture nature, when the cessation of that ceaseless flux of stages of consciousness is brought about, which relates the 'I' to the 'not-I'. Any technique, any spiritual discipline, which aims at any other objective, is not Yoga, whatever else it may be. Gorakṣa or any of the other Nāthas did not posit any other objectives; the whole aim of what they practised was *Mokṣha*, release from nescience, realisation by the Self of its true nature. This, they knew could come only by passing through the three highest stages of *Yogic* practice :—*Dhāranā, Dhyāna* and *Samādhi*. These are purely mental stages and after all it is the mind that has to be controlled. But they realised the absolute correctness of the procedure laid down by Patañjali. A healthy body is necessary, so is the control of the psychic and nervous currents and the emotions. Fidgettiness and hankering after the pleasures of the flesh are not conducive to concentration and mental peace. All these things classed by Patañjali under *Āsana* and *Prāṇāyāma* are generally associated with the modern term of *Haṭha-Yoga*. As so understood, *Haṭha-Yoga* is a necessary stage in *Yoga*, which leads directly to the higher stages of purely mental practice. It was not he believed that the practice of bodily contortions or the control of bodily functions was the final goal of *Yoga*, nor was he under the delusion that such control of the body would, in and by itself,

produce *Samādhi* and self-realisation. What he did, and quite rightly, was to emphasise the irrevocable necessity and ignored because they seem so difficult and, by a process of wishful thinking, so unnecessary.

No doubt, Gorakṣa and his school, represents a notable chapter in our country's spiritual history. The works attributed to Goraksha are available in *Saskrit* and *Hindī*. The *Hindī* contains some words of foreign origin here and there, indicating that the influence of the arrival of Muslim in India had already reached the part of the country in which he mostly lived. It would be interesting to study if any Sufi influence is traceable in his writings. Again, some of the technical terms he uses have been taken over by Kabīra and the *nirguṇa* saints who came after him and are also to be found in the works of the *Sādhas*. It would be useful to find out when they first began to come into use and what the corresponding terms are in *Sanskrit* and *Pāli Yogic* literature. There are so many other fields of possible research, to which a study of Nātha literature would open the doors.[20]

Certainly Natha tradition in a big way influenced the suffism as well as Vaisnava bhakta poets and sains.

A.K. Banerjee writing on the *Yogīs* and philosophers, says that they revolt against the bondage of mind, sensual pleasures and worldly attachments while seeking the absolute truth :

"A *Yogī* and a Philosopher have the same ultimate end in view. They are inspired by the same inherent urge of the innermost consciousness of man. Both of them are seekers of the Absolute Truth. Both of them refuse to remain content with the knowledge of the finite transitory relative truths of the world of normal human experience. They feel within themselves a deep yearning for the discovery of the infinite eternal Absolute Reality behind and beyond them. They devote themselves to the quest of the ultimate root of all existence, the ultimate Cause and Ground of this world-order, the ultimate solution of all the problems of human knowledge and experience. The human consciousness is ordinarily imprisoned in the closed domain of space, time and relativity. It is as it were condemned to live and move under spatial and temporal limitations, to think and know in terms of relativity, causalty and reciprocity. It is given opportunities to develop and expand and enrich itself within the compound of this prison; but it is not permitted to go beyond the walls of this prison. It seems that human knowledge

and experience must necessarily be finite and relative, and the world of space, time and relativity must be all in all to the human mind.

He further writes : The *Yogī* as well as the Philosopher revolts against this bondage of the human mind. Both of them aspire to break through the walls of this prison. They want to transcend the limitations, under which the ordinary human consciousness is placed by nature. For the satisfaction of the inner-most craving of their souls, they attempt to penetrate into the innermost meaning of this cosmic order. However bewilderingly complex the constitution of the world of our normal experience may appear to be, it cannot be a meaningless and purposeless process, going on by chance or accident. The wonderful order and harmony perceptible in all the departments of this complicated system of the Universe point to some dynamic Centre or Soul of this sytem, some obviously inscrutable Governing Principle or Power regulating its intricate operations, some Supreme Ideal which is being realised in and through this continuous phenomenal process. A *Yogī* and a Philosopher are both inspired by some such faith, and both of them devote their energy to the discovery of that Centre or Soul of the Universe, that Governing Principle or Power, that Supreme Ideal, which may furnish a rational explanation of this world-order and give a meaning to it.[21]

He remains under all conditions free from cares and anxieties, desires and attacthments, confusions and perplexities. All this intellectual thinking also appears to have as its centre the Truth of the super-intellectual experience.

Banerjee in his introductoy emarks further writes on the virtues and Yogic powers of a Yogi in the following words : An enlightened *Yogī*[22] in his normal life lives and moves in the domain of the senses, the mind and the intellect, but has his inner being in the peaceful and blissful realm of the super-sensuous, super-mental, superintellectual Reality. As the result of systematic discipline, his body, senses, mental functions and intellectual reflections are of course much more refined and tranquillized than those of ordinary men whose lives are almost wholly governed by worldly interest and wordly forces. Not only that. By means of appropriate *Yogic* practices, he often acquires such extraordinary powers and visions even with regard to the relative realities of the world as appear miraculous and superhuman to others. He acquires the powers of seeing and hearing things beyond the range of normal occular and

auditory perceptions and of seeing without eyes and hearing wihtout ears. He acquires the powers of knowing the events of the past and the future just as those of the present. He acquires the powers of entering into the minds of others and reading their thoughts and feelings and often exercising control over them. He may acquire the power of making his gross material body lighter than air and rising high up in the air and moving to distance places by the aerial path. He can often make his body invisible to the people present before him and can make his way through thick walls. He can acquire the power of assuming many bodies at the same time, making himself visible to people of different places and performing different actions with the different bodies. He may acquire the power of exerting control over the forces of nature and of tranforming one natural thing into another. He may acquire the power of creating new things by the mere exercise of his will and of changing the natural characters of things; and so on, and so forth. According to the *Yoga-Śāstras*, an enlightened *Yogī* may develop in himself even the power of creating a new world. Truly enlightened *Yogīs* seldom make any display of their *Yogīc* powers, which appear miraculous of superhuman to ordinary people. But, some *Yogī* teachers give occasional expressions of their minor occult powers, perhaps in order to demonstrate to the self-diffident people of the world what great powers lie hidden and dormant in them and to inspire them with the faith that they also can become masters of the forces of nature, if they undergo a systematic course of self-discipline under expert guidance in the path of *Yoga* and thereby become masters of themselves, tened *Yogis* come down to the normal planes of practical life, their behaviours are often found to be different. These differences are generaly due to the natural differences of their psycho-physical embodiment, their habits and modes of training in the pre-enlightenment period, as well as their environmental conditions. Different *Yogis* are found to have temperamental difference. Some *Yogis* are found to cut off all connections with the affairs of the external world and to pass their time in solitude in a constantly meditative mood and in continuous enjoyment of the bliss of *Samādhi* experience. They seldom allow their consciousness to come down to the lower planes. Other enlightened *Yogi* are moved by love and compassion for the people of the world, whom they see suffering various kinds of sorrows on account of their ignorance of the Eternal Truth and their hankering

for and attachment to the petty transitory things of this earth. They come in close contact with these people and adopt various means to give them True Light and emancipate them from sorrows and bondages. Inwardly, they also dwell in the plane of the Infinite and Eternal; but outwardly love and compassion make them active. It is these *Yogis* who become *Gurus* or spiritual guides in the society. It is through them that spiritual light comes down to the people of the world and awakens in their consciousness the yearning for the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality, which otherwise remains dormant in it.

The enlightened *Yogis*, who look upon all human beings and the affairs of the world from the spiritual point of view and move among the people on account of their deep-seated love and compassion form them, have in all ages been the true teachers of humanity and the true leaders of culture and civilization. It is from their lives and teachings that the people living and moving normally in the physical, vital, sensuous, mental and intellectual planes, get glimpses of the Supreme Truth underlying and pervading and transcending the world of ordinary experience and some ideas about the Highest Ideal of their lives. It is these saints who present before their fellow-beings the noblest ideals of their intellectual pursuits and social activities, the highest standards of values, the deepest meanings of life and its aspirations, the innermost significance of the wonderful order and harmony in all the departments of this most complicated cosmic process. They are the permanent sources of inspiration of men and women of all grades of the society."[23]

Banerjee further obseves that the ideas of Universal Brotherhood, Universal Love and Sympathy, Equality of all men, Sacredness of the lives of all creatures, Inherent Right to Liberty and Justice of all people, Respect for Truth for Truth's sake, Selfless and Disinterested Service to all fellow-beings, Unity of mankind and Unity of the world-order,—all such lofty idea, which have been pushing mankind to higher and higher types of civilization, have been obtained from enlightened *Yogis*, who have been instilling these ideas into the minds and hearts of the people from time immemorial. All the noblest and most dynamic idea, which have been progressively refining the human civilization, have been upon the spiritual experiences of enlightened saints, who have been preaching them in all parts of this earth for hundreds of years. It is from them that the people learn that the cultivation of their

social virtues and their sense of duty and obligation should not be confined within certain territorial boundaries or within certain recial or communal or national limits. We learn from them that our morality does not become truly human morality, until and unless it transcends the narrow domestic and communal and racial and national limits and recognises the entire mankind as one grand and beautiful family, and that our religion does not become truly spiritual religion, until and unless it rises above all sectarian and communal exclusiveness and bigotry and dogmatism and fanaticism and inspires us to feel in our heart of hearts the unity of all men and all creatures. It is these saints who have taught the human society to value self-control as superior to self-gratification, self-sacrifice as superior to self-aggrandisement, self-conquest as superior to the conquest of other people, spiritual self-fulfilment as superior to materialistic advancement, all-embracing love as superior to all-vanquishing brute-force, renunciation of all earthly goods for the sake of the eternal good of the soul as superior to ambition for and attainment of even the greatest possible power and prosperity and pleasure in this physical world. The examples they set up through their own character and conduct and the precepts they preach by words of mouth elevate the sense of dignity of man to a higher spiritual level, awaken in man the consciousness of his inner spiritual possibilities and of the true seat of his glory as the crown of the creation, and practically lead him in the path of his perfect self-realisation. These *Yogis* are the true makers of civilization."[24]

According to Banerjee when a *Yogi*, out of deep sympathy and compassion for the ignorant and distressed people of the world, feels prompted to assume the role of a public teacher and preacher, he is required to give expression to his inner experiences in such intellectual and emotional forms as may be easily intelligible and appealing to those people of the lower planes. Knowing fully well that the truth of the higher planes of spiritual experience cannot be adequately expressed in the language and concepts of the lower planes, he takes the help of various kinds of figures of speech, poetic imageries, suggestive paraboles, imperfect analogies, mystic formulas, inspiring exhortations etc., in order to awaken the deeper consciousness of the planes. The instructions of an enlightened *Yogī*, coming out of his heart with the force of his inner experience, carry conviction to the hearts of the listeners and often bring about a radical change in their outlook and mode of thought. Sometimes

a *Yogī* does not require any word of mouth or movement of limbs for the purpose of exercising his spiritual influence upon the minds and hearts of people; his presence is enough. His every presence as a living embodiment of Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Love and Bliss, exerts a mysterious influence upon the consciousness of those who come to learn from him, and even upon the cultural atmosphere of the society in which he lives.

But usually the enlightened *Yogīs*, who compassionately undertake the work of bringing down spiritual light to the people of the society suffering from ignorance and earthly desires and attachments, adopt the usual means of imparting true knowledge to them. Though inwardly dwelling in the supra-mental supra-intellectual spiritual plane, they practically adjust their modes of teaching and preaching to the mental and intellectual and even the social and physical needs of the people whom they want to serve. While in their teaching life, they primarily concern themselves with inspiring the people with spiritual ideas and ideals on the basis of their deeper experiences, they often attempt to bridge over the chasm between the practical experiences and intellectual conceptions of the ordinary people and their own spiritual realisations in the higher planes of consciousness, by means of suitable logical arguments and philosophical speculations which may appeal to the intellects and imaginations of those people. Thus the Yogis convert themselves into philosophers to suit the purpose of their teaching.

Very few among the truly enlightened *Yogī* teachers built up any regular system of philosophy. They usually give suggestive hints with regard to the Ultimate Truth, which they have realised in the plane of transcendent consciousness and which they instruct the truth-seekers to realise themselves by means of proper self-discipline, and they teach them the path in which they should proceed. Systems of philosophy are generally built up by their disciples and admirers who dwell in the intellectual plane, on the basis of the inspiring formulas and aphorism uttered by those adorable teachers. Even those enlightened Yogis who happen to present a system of philosophy to the intellectualist truth-seekers do not lay undue emphasis upon the *concepts* in terms of which they describe the Ultimate Truth and the logical arguments leading to these *concepts*. To them all such intellectual concepts are necessarily imperfect expressions of the Ultimate Truth realised in the supra-intellectual plane of the consciousness and no logical arguments

can possibly lead to that Supreme Truth. Nevertheless they recognise the value of philosophy as a mode of search for the Truth and as a mode of discipline of the mind and the intellect. The mind and the intellect are greatly purified and refined and emancipated from irrational ideas and superstitious beliefs and earth-bound dispositions through a regular course of philosophical discipline. The systematic study of philosophy under the guidance enlightened teachers can very well raise a sincere and earnest Truth-seeker from the physical, vital, sensuous and mental planes to the plane of refined intellect and lead him very near to the realisation of the Ultimate Truth. The enlightened Yogi-teachers therefore encourage their intellectualist disciples and truth-seekers to take to the systematic study of philsosophy with an unbiassed mind as a very suitable method of self-discipline and self enlightenement. The accordingly sometimes present before them a systems of philosophy for the proper regulation of their reasoning faculty and their mode of approach to Truth. These Yogi-philosophers seldom entangle themselves in polemical controvesies with the advocates of other systems of philosophy. To these enlightened teachers every well-reasoned system of philosophy is a particular mode of intellectual approach to the same supra-intellectual Truth and a particular form of effective discipline of the intellect. When the intellect is properly disciplined and refined, it becomes much easier to transcend the domain of the intellect. Gorakhnatha influenced the Indian social and religious system tremendously in his age. There is much impact of his philosophy on Kabira and othes saint poets of bhakti cult.[25]

There is one popular saying :

Bhakti Draviḍa ūpaji lāye Rāmānanda. Pragaṭa Karī Kabīr nain Aṣṭadvīpa Navakhaṇḍa.

(*Bhakti* cult born in South was brought by Rāmānanda in North. It was popularised by Kabīr.)

In all ages, in our country, the continuing tradition of holymen and religious sages, in one form or the other, have been present. Even before Buddha, the ancient sages preached their philosophy both in oral and written tradition. In Buddha's time, the *Śramaṇa* culture flourished and influenced the way of life. After decline of Buddhism tāntric practices and *yoga* in different forms are visible in *nāthas*, *siddhas* and *bhagats* belonging to lower classes.

Nātha and Sant Tradition

There is long continuity of *nātha*, *yogī* and saint tradition after decline of Buddhism which is quite an interesting phenomenon. In the *nātha* tradition as we have earlier seen prominent name of Gorakhanātha is mentioned who popularized the doctrine of *yoga* and taught mental concentration would etherialize the body of the most lowly; that would gradually unite his spirit with the all pervading soul of the world. Gorakhanātha choose Siva as his deity who could bless the votaries of whetever caste. After Buddha, Mahavir and Asoka, Gorakhnatha condemned caste system, boldly and puposely.

His disciples spread all over India by boring their ears and were identified as *Kanphaṭa Yogīs*, in large number. They gave the message of controlling sensual pleasures. It is said, they were from the lower strata of society.

Gorakhanātha in his age worked for spiritual solidarity and strengthened feelings of oneness and discarded caste prejudices.

The verses of 10th to 14th centuries *siddhas* and *nāthas*, hymns of nirguna saints of northern India, Jayadeva's saṁskṛta *padas* in *Gīta Govinda* (1200 AD), Gorakha-vānī (1000-1100 AD) and Marathi *bhakti* poetry (1300-1400 AD) played an important role in influencing the *Bhakti* tradition.

The *Nātha siddhas*, *yogis*, Śāktas, Sūfīs all were present in Kabīr's age, but the '*nirguṇa bhakti* cult' attracted all the saint bhakt poets and reformers who popularised not only bhakti of a formless God but awakened the masses through their poetry.

We see many personalities of Kabīr in his poetry. He is a top ranking nirguniā saint and a great Vedāntin, Siddha and Yogī in his poetry. He condemns scriptures and *Quran* and emphasises that love to God must be the aim of life, through self-relatisation or search of the inner soul. He was also a social reformer and a rebel against ritualism, orthodoxy of the Hindūism and Islam and philosophy of image worship or murti puja.

His message of *bhakti*, which is a unique combination of devotion to *nirguṇa*—formless God is very much true Indian in the history of Religions. All his contemporaries and later period Saints and Bhaktas have taken inspiration from his thought. His *bhakti* is as high as the Everest, it is as pure as the Ganges, it is as unique and marvellous as the universe. Above all it is unparallel.

All philosophical sects stands no where before Kabir.

It is not so easy to reach to the depths of Kabīr's socio-religious philosophy. It is difficult to explain his mystic thought. He is riddle like personality to the learned scholars, but he is so easily to be understood by the common people. Those who ignored him have been ignored by the Indian masses. Kabīr is still shining like a sun and stands firm against all darkness and ignorance. As learned scholar Daniel Gold observes :

"If *santa* (saint) tradition has come to be seen by those within it as something more than a collection of extra-ordinary holy men, it nevertheless finds its highest ideals in the individual *sants:* a distinct human being in a particular local religious situation. As individuals, moreover, *sants* had different spiritual capacities. Some were known for their humble devotion; others, for their bold assaults on the hypocrisy they perceived. Not all were gifted poets. Even though Hindi literary scholarship knows the *sants* as a particular type of devotional singer, as a religious tradition, the *sants* also include many figures who have left no verses extant at all. Of the latter, many of the most notable have been the immediate successors of (or the occasional predecessor to) some famous *sant* poet. But figures coming later in a lineage have also been remembered as important spiritual personalities. Today, we frequently see *gurus* without poetic gifts of their own giving impressive prose discourses as commentary on the verses of illustrious figures of the past—a practice common in many traditions and with likely precedent among earlier *sants.*

The most illustrious *saint* poet by far has been Kabīr, and on both the literary and religious sides of the tradition his figure looms large indeed. As one of the principal figues in both Hindī literature and North Indian religion, Kabīr has been the subject of considerable scholarship—in the West as well as in India. Monographs have been written about him, critical editions of his works attempted, and translations of his verses made. This book will not add much to the Kabīraian scholarship per se; it will, however, treat the formative influence of the figure of Kabīr on the *Hindi sant* tradition as a whole.

Little record remains of the *saint's* piety that existed in North India before Kabīra made his mark on it, but there are signs that some form of oral *sant* tradition had begun to take root in the north well before Kabīr's time. The *Ādigrantha* of the *Sikhs*,

compiled about 150 years after Kabīr's probable floruit in the first half of the fifteenth century, preserves some verses of several *bhagats*, 'devotees,' from diverse northern region. Of these, Benī and Sadhna are obscure figures who may well have antedated Kabīr. Others are understood in tradition to be in the same lineage as him : Rāmānanda is said to have been Kabīr's *guru*; *Sena*, *Dhannā*, *Pipā*, and *Raidās*, his *guru*-brothers.

There is probably some basis to Rāmānanda's reputation as a liberal Vaiṣṇava saint, a reputation which accounts for these mostly low caste *saint* disciples attributed to him by posterity. Like Kabīr, he is traditionally taken as having flourished around Banaras; but it is historically improbable that he survived there through Kabīr's time. Sena, Dhannā, and the rest might indeed have been roughly contemporaneous with Kabīr, though most were probably of a younger generation. They came, moreover, from disparate regions: the figure of Sena appears in the local legends of the kings of Bandhogarh—modern Rewa, central India, there is little doubt that Dhannā was from Rajasthan. The regional diversity of these early *saints* does seem to indicate an oral tradition that had spread throughout the north by Kabīr's age. The eventual perception of these figures as guru-brothers of Kabīr indicates the lofty stature that Kabīr grew to have among later devotees, who wanted their *gurus* to share in his glory.

The only reliable verses we have for a number of the early *saints* are the ones Guru Arjun compiled in the *Ādigrantha*. Certainly all these verses were selected in a tradition that had already experienced the impact of Kabīr. Nevertheless, some do seem to indicate a precedent in the north for the yogic language and iconoclastic tone for which Kabīr is famous. Some verses attributed to Namdev, Ravidas and others are also found in the Ādigrantha."[26]

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2

SUFĪISM AND IT'S TRADITION

Earlier to Bhakti cult and nirguna sant tradition under the influence of Kabir and his contemporaries in northern India, the doctrine of Sufism has spread and attracted the minds of the people because of its simplicity and liberalism.

Sufiism was born in the heart of Islam in the 7th century. It despised the world and inspired people to live an austere life. It stressed on the ideas of repentence and trust in god. It taught how to purify one's soul and improve morals to obtain blessings of God. Sufiism entered in India soon after *Arab* invasion.

Historian Romila Thapar tracing the origin and growth of the doctrine of Sufiism and its impact on medieval *Bhakti* cult has rightly observed :

"...the leaders of the *Bhakti* movement, who were to make a deeper impact on social rather than purely religious ideas, were those who has been influenced by Islam, and more particularly by the teachings of the *Sufis*.

The united front which *Islam* had attempted to present in a predominantly non-*Muslim* country could not be maintained for long. Whilst the *Sultanate* was in the process of establishing its power, sectarian conflicts occured, one of which seriously threatened the Sultanate itself. This took place during the reign of the queen Raziyya. The two dominant sects of *Islam* were the *Sunnis* and the *Shias**, and the *Sultans*, being *Sunnis* supported by *Sunni*

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* The main schism in *Islam* occurred in its very early days over the rule of succession the Caliphate. The *Shias* wanted it to be hereditary, through Ali, and the *Sunnis* elective. From then various differences developed. It was from the *Shias* that the more divergent sects such as *Sufis* and Dervishes derived. The *Sunnis* are considered more orthodox.

theologians, disapproved of the *Shias*. The latter had entered India with the *Arab* conqeust of *Sind* and were therefore powerful in *Sind* and *Multan*. Mahmud of Ghazni had attempted to destroy *Shia* power in *Multan*, but had failed. The ascendancy of Turkish power had diminished the possibilities of *Shia* influence in India. The *Shias*, together with schimatics, revolted unsuccessfully against the Sultanate during the reign of Raziyya, after which the *Shias* ceased to be challenge to *Sunni* domination during the Sultanate.

As Thaper writes : There was, however, another challenge to the *Sunnis* from a group of Muslim whose influence, though indirect, was nevertheless a force to be contended with. These were the *Sufis*, the saints and mystics who had also come to India with the establishment of Turkish power. They isolated themselves from society, and this disassociation had a historical explanation which is partially pertinent to the Indian situation. The *Sufis*, came into prominence in about the tenth century in Persia, with their mystical doctrines of union with God achieved through the love of God.

Such doctrines were attacked by orthodox *Islam* and the *Sufis* were regarded as heretics. This led to their becoming secretive and aloof and living in seclusion. Their language became highly symbolic and esoteric. Sometimes they formed an order under a *pir* or *shaikh*, the equivalent of the *Hindū guru*, and the members of the order were called *faqirs* (mendicants) or Dervishes (Darvesh). Some of the orders evolved a special ritual, often hypnotic in character, such as dancing until a state of trance is experienced. India, with its earlier experience of asceticism, the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*, and the devotional cults, provided a sympathetic atmosphere for the *Sufis*. There were three chief orders of *Sufis* in India; that of *Chishti*, which included the historian Barani and the poet Amir Khusrava (Khusro) among its followers and was popular in and around Delhi and the Doab, that of Suhrawardi, whose following was mainly in Sind, and that of Firdausi, whose order was popular in Bihar."[1] Sufis were liberal in thought and kept aloof from throne.

As Romila Thapar further writes : "The *Sufis* in India dissociated themselves from the established centres of orthodoxy often as a protest against what they believed to be a misinterpretation of the *Quran* by the *Ulema*. They believed that the latter, by combining religious with political policy and co-operating with the Sultanate, were deviating from the original democratic and

egalitarian principles of the *Quran*. The *Ulema* denounced the *Sufis* for their liberal ideas and the *Sufis* accused the *Ulema* of having succumed to temporal temptations. Those *Sufis* who were still in contact with society were often suspected of being disaffected, but the *Sufis* were never deeply committed to the idea of rebellion since they were both in theory and practice isolated from those conditons which they opposed. At this time also began the *Sufis* belief that the millennium was approaching and that the *mahdi* (the redeemer) would come to restore the pristine faith of *Islam*. The existence of recluses living apart from their fellows was familiar in Indian and the *Sufis* were thus a part of an established tradition. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *Sufi pīrs* were as much revered by the *Hindūs* as were the *Hindū gurus* and ascetics, all of them being regarded by the Hindūs in general as being of the same mould."*

Sufis because of their liberalism and faith in one god because popular among Indian masses. As historian Romila Thapar writes that the Islamic stress on equality was respected by the *Sufis* far more than by the *Ulema*, and this brought the mystic orders into contact with the artisans and cultivators. Thus the *Sufis* became more effective religious leaders than the distant *Ulema* for the peasants. The *Sufis* often reflected the non-conformist elements in society, and on occasion even the rationalist forces, since their mysticism was not in every case religious escapism. Some opted out of society in order to pursue knowledge based on empirical observation, when they felt that the more established tradition of rational thought had become entangled with the rigid doctrines of the orthodox. Nizam-ud-din Aulia, for instance, followed an inquiry on the laws of movement which displays a remarkable degree of empirical thought. In the popular mind mystics were also frequently associated with magic. Sidi Maula had no visible source of income, yet he was lavish in his donations to the poor, which gave rise to the suspicion that he was an alchemist; in fact his funds may well have come from the disaffected nobles who were using his

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* To this day an annual fair is held at the tomb of a comparatively obscure *pir* in one of the most hallowed sites of Hindūism, Kurukṣetra, where thousands of Hindū villagers from the countryside around gather to worship at the tomb. The same villagers will point to a site barely half a mile away, where on an island in the midst of the sacred tank are the visible remains of a Hindū temple believed to have been destroyed by an irate Muslim governor. (Thapar)

hospice as a base to organize opposition to the Sultanate. In all this the *Sufis* had their precursors in Indian society in the previous centuries."

Sufis commanded respect in society and were influential mystic-saintly persons. It is believed their liberal thought and love to God later on attracted Vaiṣṇavite saints. Sufis interestingly kept themselves quite aloof from social interaction, compared to Bhakti movement.

Romila Thapar has rightly analysed and observed : "It is unfortunate that the *Sufis*, who in the early years were the most effective original thinkers in the spheres of both politics and religion, should have detached themselves from the social framework. Had they contributed from within society, their impact would have been more direct and they could have mobilized support of a less purely reilgious nature. This might in turn have been of considerable help to the leaders of the new socio-religious development within the *Bhakti* movement. Al-though this was a continuation of the earlier devotional cult, *Sufi* ideas influenced its doctrines, as did also certain typically Muslim concepts, particularly those about social justice.

Sufi and *Bhakti* thought and practice coalesced at various points. The essential belief in the need to unite with god was common to both, as was the stress on love as the basis of the relationship with God. Both believed also that the acceptance of a *guru* or a *pir*, at least in the initial stages, was necessary. But the mysticism of the *Sufis* was not encouraged by all the *Bhakti* saints,* since the purpose of the latter was not to remain aloof and isolated from the people, but rather to make their teaching comprehensible even to simple minds."[2] Sufiism attracted the people of Punjab as the Islam entered into Indian soil through this land.

Sufiism in India

Sufiism has been studied in more detail, with special reference to Punjabi Sufiism, its poets and poetry by Lajwanti Rāmakrishna, which flourished between 1460 A.D. to 1900 AD.**

Nodoubt, Sufiism influenced the medieval period bhakti movement and and later saint-poetic trends in a big way.

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* Gradually, Sufiism spread throughout India though its influence in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan was much more.

** Lajwanti Rama Krishna: Punjabi Sufi Poets, A.D. 1460-1900. London, O.U.P., 1938. Rp. xxxiii, 145.

As Ramakrishna tracing the origin and growth of Sufiism writes : Puñjābī Ṣūfiism, evidently, is a branch of the great Ṣūfī movement which originated in Arabia, during the second century A.H. (A.D. 800).[3] It differs a good deal, however, in details, from the original, being subjected to many modifications under the influence of *Hindū* religious and philosophic thought. Before following up the evolution and the final trend of *Ṣūfī* thought in the Pañjāb, it is necessary to review briefly the outstanding features of this *Islāmic* sect as it developed outside India.

Rama Krishna writes : Ṣūfiism was born soon after the death of the prophet and 'proceeded on orthodox line',[4] Its adepts had ascetic tendencies, led hard lives, practising the tenets of the *Qur'ān* to the very letter. But this asceticism soon passed into mysticism, and before the end of the second century A.H. (A.D. 815), these ascetics began to be known to the people as *Ṣūfīs*.[5] The name *Ṣūfī* was given to them because they wore woollen garments. The term, *labisa'l-ṣūf*, which formely meant 'he clad himself in wool', and was applied to a person who renounced the world and became an ascetic,[6] henceforward signified that he became a Ṣūfī.[7]

In fact the early mysticism was essentially a product of *Islām*,[8] and originated as a consequence of the *Islāmic* conception of God which failed to satisfy many persons possessing spiritual tendencies. The two striking factors in the early mysticism, as Goldziher has stated,[9] were an exaggerated consciousness of sin and an overwhelming dread of divine retribution. They feared God more than they loved Him, and submitted unreservedly to His Will.[10] But in the beginning of the second century A.H. (A.D. 815) the *Ṣūfī* thought began to develop under the influence of Greek philosophy of Ashrākiān[11] and Dionysius.[12] Christianity, itself enveloped by Neoplatonic speculations, exercised a great influence in monastic organizations and discipline.[13] Hebrew philology,[14] to a certain extent, helped the progress of the technical vocabulary. But the Greek influence seems to have been the most powerful, because, besides philosophical ideas, the Ṣūfīs borrowed from the Greeks the medical science which they named *yunānī* or the Greek system.[15] Neoplatonism developed intellectual tendencies. The civil wars and dry dogmas of the '*ulamā* soon drove the intellectual *Ṣūfīs* to scepticism.[16] They searched elsewhere for truth and knowledge. The search was not in vain, and soon a new school was established, different from the one already existing. It was greatly influenced by Persian religion and Indian thought, both Buddhist and Hindū.[17]

The adherents of the new school were almost all of non-Semitic origin, their national characters were formed by the climatic and geographical position of their countries,[18] and so, in spite of Semitic master, the psychology of their own race affected their new faith. To them the doctrines of *Islām* seemed unphilosophic and non-gnostic, and so they felt compelled to interpret them in the light of their old faiths with which they had been in touch and which appealed to them deeply. Thus later, Ṣūfiism was also a psychological reaction of differnt peoples, especially the Persians, against the dogmas of *Islām.*

The latest school of Ṣūfiism which felt Persian and Indian influences and incoporated different glosses of Buddhism with its creed came in the forefront under Bāyazīd of *Bisṭām,* who was not attached to any old *Ṣūfī* school.[19] *Bisṭāmī's* system was based on *fanā* or absolute annihilation in the Divine.[20] Bāyazīd was so captivated by the *Vedāntic* conception of God that he used to say: 'Glory to me, how my glory is great.'[21]

This school developed still further under Manṣūr-al-Ḥallāj, who invented the formula *Ana'l-Ḥaqq.*[22] This Ṣūfiism transformed the Buddhist legends and panegyrics and introduced them into *Islām.* In Central Asia, where Buddhist legends were congealed around the saints, Ṣūfiism evolved a cult of saints. Pilgrimage, another Buddhist practice, was also introduced. Besides this, Ṣūfiism borrowed the *Ṭarīqa* from the same source. Before being *fanā,* the Ṣūfī seeker must tread by slow stages the *Ṭarīqat* or *Ṭarīqat* or the path to reach *Ḥaqīqa* or *Ḥaqīqat,* Reality, or the goal of Union. The path comprised seven stages : repentance, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God, and satisfaction.[23]

In one way Sufiism was greatly influenced by Upanishadic philosophy, and Buddhism. And certainly some other Asian minor sects have influenced its philosophy.

Earlier sufiism faced many ups and downs. So much so that the *Ṣūfis* of the *Bāyazīd* school were tolerant towards all the attached little importance of Islāmic dogmas. They were, therefore, considered heretics and were often hanged or exiled.[24] This alarmed the adherent of the new *Ṣūfī* school. The *Ṣūfis,* is general were not popular with the powerful orthodox. To avoid the fury of the orthodox and to save their lives, all the *Ṣūfis* thenceforward regconized Muḥammad as their ideal and tried to deduce their thought from the allegorical sayings of the *Qur'ān.*[25]

The *Ṣūfīs* in India

After the Muslim conquest of northern India, the *Ṣūfīs* began to pour into the country. This was the only peaceful, friendly and tolerant element of *Islām*. The *Islām* promulgated by the sword[26] and by aggressive '*ulamā* and *qāzīs* could not impress the *Hindūs* who abhorred it. But the *Islām* represented by the *Ṣūfīs* appealed to them. Almost all the willing conversions were no doubt the result of *Ṣūfī* preaching. Simple teachings, liberalism, equality and negation of untouchability and caste prejudices attracted the low castes towards sufism.

In the beginning the *Ṣūfīs* in northern India were preachers and often joined hands with the ruler to established their power and to convert the people to Islām.[27] Their patience, tolerance and friendly spirit brought them followers from the lower grades of the Hindūs, unfortunately neglected by the higher classes. These people were the untouchables of India condemned by Hindus, whom Kabira awakened and give them separate identity in later times.

Many Sufis encouraged conversions of Hindus. *Ṣūfīs* who belonged to this class were Farīdu'ddīn Ganj-i-Shakar, 'Alī Makhdūm Hujwīrī, and many others. But, later on, many *Ṣūfīs* gave up missionary work[28] and devoted themselves to the study of different religious sytems and philosophies of the country. Miā Mīr Prince Dārā Ṣhikoh and Abu'l-Fazl and Fayzī belonged to this category of Ṣūfīs; they began to question the superiority of their own religion or to deny its authority.[29] Miā Mīr is said to have helped *Gurū* Har Govind many a time and to have sent him a woman, related to the Qāazī of Lahore, who liked the *Gurū's* doctrines and had wanted to become a Sikha.[30]

But silently conversions took place when lower classes got respect from Muslim. Even people of upper castes who got favours and jobs converted themselves to Islam, under the Sufi influence.

Ṣūfiism underwent another considerable change towards the end of the seventeenth century. The intolerance of Aurangzeb and of his adherents had so much affected the spiritually and the intellectually minded amongst the Ṣūfīs that they were driven towards Hindūism more than bofore.[31] *Hindū Vedāntic* thought overpowered their beliefs, *Bhāgvatism* influenced their idea, and it was a surprising fact that in the Pañjāb, as well as in northern India the stronghold of *Islām*, *Mussulman* mystics held the view that

save God there was no reality; all else, therefore, became illusion or the *Hindū māyā*.[32]

The doctrine of transmigration and reincarnation was soon adopted and was afterwards supplemented by the theory of *karma*.[33] Again Muḥammad, who remained the perfect model of Man (Godly person) for the Sufis of other countries, was not necessarily the ideal of the Punjabi *Ṣūfī*. The philosophically-minded sometimes ignored him, at other times allotted to him the same place as they gave to the prophets of other religions.[34] For the orthodox and popular Ṣūfīs he nevertheless remained somewhat higher than the other prophets, but not in the same way as before. He became the hero of their poerty as Krṣṇa is the hero of the Bhāgavata-lore.[35] The condemnation of idols, which had not been very vehement even in the sixteenth century, ceased altogether now. Muhammadan mystics accepted them as another way of adoring the Universal Lord.[36] *Ṣūfīs* often abstained from eating meat and practised the doctrine of *ahiṁsā* by loving all life, animal and human.[37]

The *Qur'ān*, which could not be dispensed with and was held in great veneration by the early *Ṣūfīs*, was now placed on the same level with the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas*. It was a great change ideologically, at a time when nirguna school of poetry and bhakti cult led by Kabira and others had arose in India.

Last but not the least, it should be mentioned here that the principle of religious tolerance was advocated by many mystics who denounced fanaticism and admitted freedom of religious beliefs.[38] Bahu and Bullhe Shah's works can be cited in this regard.

The above were the new developements in Ṣūfiism in India, specially on Puñjābī soil. They were, however, not the chief characteristics of every *Ṣūfi's* teachings. These new developments, on the other hand, helped in the classification of the *Ṣūfīs*. The *Ṣūfīs* of the Pañjāb may be classed into three schools of thought :

1. *The Orthodox School*—*Ṣūfīs* of this school believed in conversion from one religion to another. They held that the *Qur'ān* was the best book revealed and that Muḥammad was God's greatest prophet on earth. Though they tolerated different religions, yet they believed *Islām* to be the only true creed. To this of *Ṣūfīs* belonged Farīd Ṣānī and' Alī Ḥaidar.

2. *The Philosophic School*—The *Ṣūfīs* of the philosophic school were speculators and thinkers. They had absorbed the essence of *Vedānta* so well that to them differences of religion, country,

and sect were immaterial. They abhorred regulations and the dry dogmas of all religions. They displayed best the essence of panthestic Ṣūfiism. They ignored conversion and were chiefly responsible for establishing unity between the faithful of various religions. Bullhe Shāha belonged to this school.

3. *The Popular School*—The adherents of this school were men of little or no education. These people collected the beliefs and superstitions of various creeds, and preached and practised them. Muḥammad remained their only prophet and the *Qur'ān* their best book, but they provided a place for all other prophets and teachers in their long list of saints and angels. They were popular with the lower classes of both *Hindūs* and *Muslims*. To the *Hindūs* they preached the *Qur'ān* and the superstitions of *Islām*, while to the Muhammadans they preached the popular beliefs and superstitions of both. As they were apt to change with the times and conditions, they were dangerous equally to *Islām* and to *Hindūism*. To this class belonged Fard Faqīr and many others.

Ṣūfī Poetry

Ramakrishna further writes that the *Ṣūfīs* of the Pañjāb, like the *Ṣūfīs* of other parts of India, wrote for centuries together in the Persian language.[39] They copied the phraseology, the similes, and, in fact, the whole system of Persian prosody and rhetoric in its entirety. Later on, the *Ṣūfīs* began to write in *Urdū*. But this *Urdu* looked for guidance to Persia and was so much overlaid by Persian vocabulary, phraseology, and *jeux de mots*,[40] that it was really Persian diluted by an Indian language. It is most unfortunate that the national culture was thus paralysed, and national sentiments and thoughts were allotted a secondary place in their composition. It was only in the middle of the fifteenth century that the initiative to write in the language of the people, i.e. Puñjābī, was taken by a saint of the *Cishtī* order of the *Ṣūfī*.[41] This initiator was Shaikh Ibrāhīm Farīd, a descendant of Farīdu'ddīn Ganj-i-Shakar of *Pāk Paṭan*. His example was follwed by many, of whom Lāl Ḥusain, Sulṭān Bāhū, Bullhe Shāh,' Alī Ḥaidar, and Hāshim are the outsanding and well-known figures. A considerable amount of fragmentary Puñjābī *Ṣūfī* poetry, of various authorship, has also been found.[42] A few of these poems contain the names of the writers, but not much more.

The Ideal of the Ṣūfī Poet

In fact the ideal of the Puñjābi mystic poet was to find God in all His creation and thus attain union with Him. This union or annihilation in God was to be fully achieved after death, but in some cases its was gained while living.[43] The Puñjābī *Ṣūfī*, like any other mystic in the world, calls God his Beloved. But the Beloved, who in Islāmic conuntries was both masculine and feminine,[44] here became musculine.

In Puñjābi, *Ṣūfī* poetry, therefore, God is the Beloved and the *Ṣūfī*, or the human soul, the woman separated from her lover by illusion or *māyā*. The *Ṣūfī* soul at times wails, then cries and yearns for union with the Beloved. The *Ṣūfī* poet in the Puñjāb generally refers to three stories of perfect love in his poetry. They are the love tales of Hīr Rāñjhā, Sassī Punnū, and Sohṇī Mahīvāl.[45] These tales of perfect love which end tragically are popular with all Puñjābīs.

In all the three, the heroines, Hīr, Sassī and Sohṇī, who spent their lives in sorrow, always yearning to meet their respective lovers were united with them in death. For a *Ṣūfī* these tales[46] have a spiritual significance. The heroines stand for the *Ṣūfī* (the soul) and the heroes for God (the Beloved sought). After the *Ṣūfī* has attained union with God he is no more Hīr[47] but becomes Rāñjhā, because for him all differences vanish away and he sees Rāñjhā (God) as much in his own self as in the external world. The *Ṣūfī* poetry consequently is full of poems, songs and hymns praising the Beloved, describing the pain and sorrow inflicted by separation, and ultimately the joy, peace and knowledge attained in the union. These legendary stories influenced the culturul and literary pattern of whole of Punjab for centuries.

Characteristics of Ṣūfī Poetry

In the opinion of Ramakrishna, the learned writes on Sufiism the foreign invasion and political changes retarded its growth in towns and cities.[48] Its torch consequently was kept burning in the villages. Having been evolved in the villages, it lacks that point of extreme elaboration to which *Ṣūfī* poets carried other language, such as *Persian* and *Urdū*. Mysticism being more predominant than materialism in Puñjābī Ṣūfī poets' temperaments, all complexity of expression, the artificial and ornate style, the jingle of words

and bombastic laugnage is missing from it. The chief effort of the poets was to give direct expression of their pious feelings in as brief a manner as possible. The vocabulary, similes and technical terms were confined to home trades, cottage industries, and the prevalent mythological ideas[49] and social customs. This should not, however, indicate that the langauge is crude and vulgar. No, the great anxiety to convey the devotional emotions, correctly often imparted a sort of beauty and sweetness rare to the artificial *Urdū* poetry. Similes were taken from everyday life and were used with skillful restraint and proceeded in order. The result was that though this poetry lacked dazzling brilliancy and poetic conceit, it always maintained dignity, order, and sincerity. To sum up, it can be stated here that, as the guiding principle of Puñjābī *Ṣūfī* poetry was the subordination of the parts to the whole, its chief merit lies exclusively in its beauty of fundamental and not in its details.

Verse-forms

According to Ramakrishna the principal forms of Puñjābī *Ṣūfī* verse are the following :

Kāfī. This name is borrowed from the *Persian kafiya* (meaning rhyme), and is applied to Puñjābī *Ṣūfī* poetry generally. Usually it is a poem on the divine attributes and sometimes on different Ṣūfī beliefs. *Kāfīā* are found in different *chandas*, mostly *prākṛit*, and the *rāgas* of the Puñjābī musical system.[50]

Bāra māh is an account of the twelve months of the Puñjābī year. The poet describes the pangs of divine separation in each of these months. At the end of the twelfth month he relates the ultimate union with the Almighty. Almost all *Ṣūfī* poets have composed a *bārāmāh.*

Aṭhavārā or a description of eight days. For seven days the seeker waits anxiously for God. Then when the last hope is fading he finds himself in the divine embrace on the eighth day.

Sīharfī is an acrostic on the alphabet. It is not found in any other Indian language. As it is not of *Persian* or *Arabic* origin we conclude that it is Puñjābī form. The oldest verse of this kind is found in the *Ādi Grantha* of the *Sikhs* and was composed by Arjuna Dev.[51] Later on it appears to have become a popular verse-form of the *Ṣūfīs.* Some of them wrote more than two or three *sīharfīs.*[52] *Sīharfī,* precisely, is not a short poem but is a collection of short poems. The letters of the alphabet are taken consecutively, and

words whose initials they form are employed to give metriacal expression to the poet's ideas. Here is an example :

Alif allāh cambe dī būṭī murshid man mere vice lāī hū
Nafī asbāt dā pāṇī mālī sī rahe rage har jāī jū
Andar būṭī mushk macāyā jā phullaṇ paī āī hū
Jīve murshid kāmil bāhū jaī eh būṭī lāī hū.[53]

Alif: Allāh is like the plant of *cambā*[54] which the preceptor planted in my heart, O He, by water and gardener of negative and positive (respectively) it remained near the *rag*[55] and everywhere, O He, it spread fragrance inside when it approached blossoming, O He, may the efficient preceptor live (long) says Bāhū, who planted this plant, O He.

There do not seem to have been any hard and fast rules about *sīharfī*. Generally a letter has four lines, each consisting of two *tukks*, but sometimes a letter may have five, six or more such lines.[56] Some poets wrote a number of such poems for each letter. For example, if the letter is *alif*, the first line of each such poem will begin with *alif*.

As a rule a *sīharfī* is written in praise of the Beloved (God) and his attributes, but sometimes it is written to relate some legend, historical or imaginary.[57] In *Ṣūfī* literature, however, we have found only one such *sīharfī*.[58]

The *sīharfīs* of the Muhammadans are on Arabic or Persian alphabets. They did not compose any on the *nāgarī* or Puñjābī alphabets, though *Hindūs* of different sects have written *sīharfīs* on the Arabic and Persian alphabets.[59]

Qissā is another form of *Ṣūfī* verse. It is generally a tragic story of two young people who love each other madly. They are separated by parents and cruel social conventions to which they pay little attention, and disregarding them try to meet each other. This disregard brings misfortune and so they die, ultimately to be united in death for eternity. Some *qissās* are composed on the *sīharfī* principle, others are composed of *baīts*, sometimes called *ślokas*.

Baīt is the corrupted form of the Arabic word *bait*.[60] It is a sort of couplet poem, has very few rules and therefore has a good deal of variety. It is very popular with the Puñjābīs of all classes.

Dohrā is another form of *Ṣūfī* verse. It is not the *Hindī dohā* but resembles closely the *chanda*. It has four *tukkas*, all rhyming

in the same manner. This was the favourite verse-form of Hāshim.

There is another form of verse common to all Puñjābī religious poetry, called *vār*. Originally *vār* meant a dirge (*vār*) for the brave slain in battle. But then it began to be employed in songs composed in praise of the Almighty God or some great religious personage.[61] It is composed of various stanzas called *pauḍīs*, literally 'steps', which are sung by minstrels at religious shrines. There is a continuous tradition of Rama-Krishna legends in Hindi poetry in various forms. In the Indian mind the great mythological figures Siva, Rama, Krishna, etc. occupied a devotional and respectful place in all times while Kabira and his contemporaries accepted and rathe thought of formless omnipresent, all powerful God as a seviour of the oppressed humanity.

We see a good number of Ṣūfi poets made attempts to create friendly feelings between the different communities by harmonizing the opposing systems. For this reason their poetry became clear to all sections of the people. Besides, from the literary point of view also it deserved and was alloted a very high place. It retains the favour of both Hindūs and Mussulmans and circulates among the masses in the form of songs, proverbs, and hymns even to this day.[62] In short, wihout this strain, Pañjābī literature would be poor and devoid of good deal of its beauty and literary charm.

Here we shall give explanations of those few words that are used in their original forms in our discussion of the Ṣūfī poets.

Gaddī-nishīn :[63] one who occupies the spiritual seat of a saint; a spiritual successor.

Murīd : a disciple.

Murshid : a preceptor or a teacher.

Pīr : *murshid.*

Khalīfā : chosen successor of a teacher; a successor.

'*Urs* : nuptial festivals held at *Ṣūfī* shrines. '*Urs* or nuptials signifies the union of the *Ṣūfī* with God.

Rahāu : chorus; refrain cr the first verse of a song indicating the musical tune to which the remainder is to be sung.

Antarā : a poem or song expecting the refrain.

It has been mentioned above that the *Ṣūfīs* in their compositions employed, except for a few technical terms and words concerning *taṣawwuf* borrowed from *Arabic* and *Persian*, the vocabulary and terms of local trades and cottage industries. In the

Puñjāb as elsewhere the villages and towns were self-supporting units.[64] necessities of life in those times were produced by the people themselves. The *Ṣūfī* poetry which was nursed the towns and villages therefore bore strong impressions of its surroundings. The most important industry of the Puñjāb, which flourished more or less in every village, town, and city, was the cotton industry.[65] This cotton manufacture comprised three processes :

1. Cleaning and carding of cotton and making small rolls ready for spining. This was done by both men and women.
2. Spinning, turning cotton into yarn, done entirely by women.
3. Weaving, done by men, though often feminine aid was procured.

The Ṣūfis made ample use of the vocabulary of this industry and took similies from it. The poetry of Kabira is full of such terminology as he himself was a weaver. We give below the vocabulary relative to cotton manufacture, which may be of help to those who are interested in Ṣūfī poetry.

The first process, cleaning of cotton :

Tumbṇā : to open the cocoons by hand. This operation was generally perfomed by the womenfolk.

Velṇā : the instrument used for separating the seeds.

Velavī : one who works on the *velṇā.*

Jhambhṇā or *Piñjṇā* to cord cotton.

Peñjāh or *Piñjāh* : cotton carder.

Punni : a small roll of carded cotton prepared for spinning.

The second process, spinning : To the *Ṣūfī* world was a spinning-wheel and his self or soul the young girl who supposed to spin and prepare her dowry. His good actions were like spinning, and the yarn thus spun was his dowry which, like the young girl, he would take to the husband (God). As a husband loved and lived happily with the wife who brought him a dowry and was qualified in spinning,[66] so did God love the *Ṣūfī* who died with a good account (*karma* or actions) and possessed qualities that would befit a soul striving for good. But like that obstinate and short-sighted girl who, ignoring the future consequence, spent her time in games and replied to her mother's remonstrances by stating that one part or the other of the spinning-wheel was out of order, the ignorant *Ṣūfī* made excuses for his indulgence in worldly pleasures. In the end, like the idle young girl, he was ignored by the Beloved and

union was denied him. Thereupon he bewailed his sorrow and described the pangs of Divine seaparation.

The influence of mystic thought and verse on Puñjābī literature was tremendous. There were hardly any poet of renown who remained free from this influence. The writers of romance like Vāre Shāh or Wārīs Shāh absorbed so much of *Ṣūfī* ideas that people often wronlgy thought them to be mystics.

Here, for example, Vāre Shāh speaks like a Ṣūfī :

Paḍh paḍh ilam kazā paye karṇ muftī
Bajah ishk de rahṇ majhūl mīān
Paḍhiā ilam nā rabb dī tūm hundī
Ikko ishk dā haraf mākul miān.[73]

Reading and studying knowledge, the *muftīs* give judgement, but without love they have remained ignorant, Sir; by studying knowlege the secret of God is not known, only one word of love is efficient, Sir.[74]

The *Ṣūfī* idea that love was supreme and beyond all religious and social barriers has also passed on into the entire Puñjābī literature. An example here will not be out of place :

Kahindā ishk dī zāt safāt nāhī
Nāhī āshkā dā mazhab dīn rāṇī
Ishk zāt kuzāt nā puchchdāī
Es ishk dī bāt acarj rāṇī.
Ishk pāk palīt nā samjh dāī
Nahī jāṇ dā kufr islām rāṇī
Amām Bakhsh nā khauf hai āshkā nū
Khāh maut hoai khāh jindgāṇī.[75]

(He) says for love exists no race and qualities, nor have lovers religion and creed, Queen. Love asks not high or low caste, the tale of this love is wonderful, Queen. The Lover understands not pure and impure, nor recognizes heathenism and Islām, Queen. Amām Bakhsh, the lovers have no fear whether death occurs or life remains.

We see Kabir, Ravidas and oher saint poets of Bhakti school were true lovers of God. They were not afraid of any Muslim Sultanate of that time. They were fearless and united the people.

The mystic belief in the instability of creation and the deception played by the illusion of this world also took deep root in con-

temporary literature. It blossomed out in one form or another. Here is an example :

> Ethe āyān nū duniyān moh laīdī daghe bāzī dā dhār ke bhes mīyān.
> Sadā nahīn javāṇī te aish māpe sadā nahīn jebālvares mīyān,
> Sadā nahī je daultā fīl ghoḍe sadā nahīn je rājiān des mīyān,
> Shāh Muḥammadā sadā nā rūp duniyān sadā rahṇ nā kālare kes mīyān.[76]

Here come, human beings are deluded by the world, wearing the guise of a deceiver, Sir. For ever are not youth, pleasures and parents, nor for ever stays childhood, Sir. For ever are not treasures, elephants and horses, nor for ever kings kingdoms possessed, Sir. Shāh Muḥammad, for ever in the world is not beauty, nor for every stays the hair black, Sir.

Nirguna bhakti saint—poets also said like sufis that everything is subject to decay. Only Supreme Being, the God is great and everlasting.

These few examples, are enough to show the extent of *Ṣūfī* influence on literature in general.

The first Puñjābī *Ṣūfī* poet is Shaikh Ibrāhīm, a famous *pīr* of the Puñjāb. All authorities agree in saying that he belonged to the *Cishtī* order of the *Ṣūfīs*, and lived between A.D. 1450 and 1575.

This was the time when Vaisnavism flourished in northern India.

The Chistīs of the Pañjāb

In the words of Ramakrishna this order was originally founded by Abū Izḥāk Shāmī of Cisht,[77] but in the Pañjāb it was revived in the thirteenth century[78] by Farīdu'ddīn, generally known as Shaker Ganj.[79]

The grandfather of Farīdu'ddīn migrated to India from Persia early in the twelfth century. Farīd was born fifty years later in the village Khotwās[80] near Multān, in the year A.H. 565 (A.D. 1171-2).[81] He became a disciple of Qutbu'ddīn of Delhi. On his master's death he inherited his patched mantle and other personal belongings. He came to settle down at *Ajodhan* afterwards known as Pāk Paṭan.[82] From here he began his missionary work in the Puñjāb. On his death, his work was carried on by his descendants

from Pāk Paṭan, and his disciples scattered all over northern India to carry his message, always looking to Pāk Paṭan as their spiritual centre.[83] Shaikh Ibrāhīm was the eleventh descendant of Farīdu'ddīn.[84]

Not much is known about the birth and childhood of Ibrāhīm. There is complete silence with regard even to the date of his birth. The *Khulāṣat-ut-Tawārīkh* states that he died in A.H. 960 or A.D. 1554 at Sirhind where he was buried after a spiritual reign of forty-two years.[85] But both the *Jawāhir-i-Farīdī* and the Gulzār-i-*Farīdī* relate that he died at Pāk Paṭan in the year A.H. 959 or A.D. 1553-4.[86]

In Pāk Paṭan there is still a tomb known as that of Ibrāhīm. We therefore believe that he died at *Ajodhan* as the two above-mentioned biographies state.[87] He is said to have reigned as the *pīr* for forty-two years, and therefore his birth must have taken place some time in the middle or the end of the fifteenth century.

After having pursued the ordinary curriculum of secular studies he was initiated into the Cishtī order and went through the spiritual training of a *Ṣūfī*. In course of time he succeeded his father Khwāja Shaikh Muḥammad in A.H. 916-17 and became the *gaddī-naṣhīn*.[88] He seems to have resembled Farīd closely in person and in sanctity, and therefore was named Farīd Ṣānī or Farīd the Second. He had frequent interview with Hindū saints and reformers, and with dervishes of Islām.[89] The titles and appellations which Ibrāhīm bore[90] show the great influence he wielded over the masses. He was called:

Farīd Ṣānī or the Second
Ṣāliṣ Farīd or Farīd the Arbitrator,
Shaikh Ibrāhīm Kalān or Ibrāhim the Elder,
Bal Rājā or the mighty king.

This last named is a Hindū appellation applied only to a person who holds great spiritual power. To the Hindūs and the masses he was also Shaikh Brāhm. Brāhm is a corrupt form of Ibrāhim.[91] Ibrāhīm's popularity amongst the Hindūs of his time is rather amazing. Sufiism was liberal, but not the Muslim raiders, looters and anarchiots.

A long residence in India, a sincere study of her religions and philosophies, and the political environment had weakened the proselytizing zeal which animated the soul of Farīd the First.[92] The *Ṣūfīs* were not very popular with the rulers, and so they could

befriend the cause of the people, and ensure their own safety against the tyranny of a fanatical ruler only by their influence over people...." Muslim domination made Hindu masses helpless. Those who surrendered and appreciated got favours and status and became a part of Muslim ruling class. Many Hindus of upper strata embraced Islam. There was much confusion among Hindus and at last Vaisnavism saved the Hindu Community.

Reference

1. Romila Thapar : A History of India, pp. 305-308.
2. Ibid.
3. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* Vol. XII, p. 10
4. Nicholson in *J. R. A. S.,* Vol. XXXVIII, 1906.
5. *J. R. A. S.,* Vol. XXXVIII, 1906, p. 305.
6. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* Vol. XII, p. 10. E. B. Havell, however, is of opinion that the world *urṇa, (una),* which in Buddhist images was the symbol of 'eye divine', literally meant 'wool'. His symbolic explanation may underlie the symbol of Ṣūfiism, *śūf* meaning wool. See *Ideals of Indian Art,* pp. 50-1.
7. Ibid.
8. Its roots according to Macdonald run far back to Heathen Arabia. (See *Muslim Theology,* pp. 124, 125).
9. As quoted by Nicholson in his article (*J. R. A. S.* Vol. XXXVIII, 1906). The original can be seen in *Vienna Oriental Journal,* Vol. XIII, No. 1, p. 35.
10. As ordained in the *Qur'ān.*
11. Munshi Fani, *Dabistān,* Vol. III, p. 281. Shea and Troyler translated it as 'Platonists'.
12. Nicholson in *J. R. A. S.,* Vol. XXXVIII, 1906, p. 318.
13. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* Vol. XII, p. 11.
14. Massignon, *Lexique Technique de la Mystique Musulmane,* pp. 51, 52, 53, 54.
15. Rāma Kṛṣṇa, *Les Sikhs,* ch. i, p. 18.
16. These sceptics were mostly of non-Arabic orgin, the majority being Persians and Kurds.
17. Professor Massignon is vehementaly hostile to any *Hindū* influence and ignores traces of Buddhism. The admirable way in which the learned professor attempts to interpret Ṣūfiism i.e. only on a philological basis, is one-side. His knowledge of Hindūism is not very deep and so his mind is prejudiced against Hindū thought. For Buddhist influence, see *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* Vol. XII, and Nicholson's works.
18. Climate and geographical position, according to Nöldeke, the German scholar, are two very important factors in the formation of national character. See *Sketches from Eastern History,* p. 2. (When Islam settled down in India, Sufiism as a liberal cult of mystics spread on Indian soil).
19. *Lexique Technique,* p. 243.
20. He learnt *Fanā bi'l tawḥid* from his teacher Abū'Alī Sindī (or of Sind)

to whom in exchange, he taught the Hanefite canonical law (see *Lexique Technique*, pp. 263-4). Nicholson also mentions this fact (see *The Mystics of Islam*, p. 17).

21. *Lexique Technique*, p. 246.
22. This is the equivalent of *Aham Brahm*.
23. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, p. 29. The Ṣūfī teachers do not agree as to the number of the stages. Most of them enumerate more than seven.
24. Bisṭāmī was exiled many times from his native town (see *Lexique Technique* p. 247) and Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj was crucified (Massignon, *La Passion*, I. pp. 9-10). (They were regarded of anti Islamic traditions).
25. Bāyazīd openly declared himself the equal of the Prophet and ridiculed the Day of Resurrection, the Judgement, and the Qur'ānic paradise. See *Lexique Technique*, pp. 252-3. (He can be compared with rebel Kabir).
26. The bold assertion of Professor Massignon that 'ce n'est pas par les guerres que l'Islām a diffuse dans l'Inde, c'est par les mystiques et par les grands ordres, Tshistiyah Kobrawiyah, Shaṭṭāriyah et Naqshbandiyah' (*Lexique Technique*, p. 68) shows his scanty knowledge of Indian history.
27. Shaikh 'Alī Makhdūm Hujwīrī, generally know as Dātā Ganj Baksh, followed the arms of Masa'ud, son and successor of Maḥmud Ghaznavī, to Lahore, where he settled down to preach. (See Latif, *History of Lahore*, pp. 179-82.) There are many such examples.
28. Mr. Zahūrud-Dīn Ahamad, in his *Mystic Tendencies in Islam*, p. 142, writes: 'Out of the later Ṣūfis very few appear to have given any thought to this practical aspect (conversion) of the doctrine of Islāmic Ṣūfiism.'
29. Emperor Akbar is another example; his faith in the superiority of Islām was so much shattered that he founded a new religion, *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*. (He was greatly influenced by Indian cultural and religious traditions. He came on earth because of blessings of a Sufi saint Khwaja of Ajmer).
30. See Latif, *History of the Punjāb*, p. 256.
31. No doubt the Ṣūfis during the reign of Shah Jahān, under the patronage of Prince Dārā Ṣhikoh, had absorbed a good deal of Hindū *Vedāntic* though, but they remained, save for a few rare exceptions, within the limits of their own religion. The intolerance of the orthodox people and of the Emperor Aurangzeb, however, later on compelled them to speak freely against Islāmic dogmas, etc., and to turn more towards Hindū religion with real feeling than they had done before. Both Ināyat and Bullhe Shāh were born during this period. In Mughal period sufiism was popular as people friendly.
32. *Dabistān*, Vol. III, p. 281.
33. *Kānūn-i-Ishq*, Vol. I, *kāfis* 2 and 37. 'The doctrine of *Karma* which is alien to Ṣūfiism' (*The Mystics of Islam*, p. 19) became now one of its doctrines.
34. Bullhe Shah is very popular among Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims as a great sufi mystic poet. See the poetry of Bullhe Shāh, specially *kāfī* 90 of *Sāī Bullhe Shāh*.
35. See the *Bārāmāh* of Karīm Baksha, ch. ix.
36. *Sāhibjāni*, a celebrated Ṣūfī of the seventeenth century, performed the *pūjā* in the house of idols (*Dabistān*, Vol. III, p. 302). The Puñjābi Ṣūfī fortunately did not go to that extreme but considered both temple and mosque the same. When he had attained the stage of understanding the mosque the same. When he had attained the stage of understanding he even ceased

to go to the mosque. His temple and mosque were everywhere. See Bullhe Shāh, *Qānūn-i-'Ishq, kāfī* 58. (Compare with Kabir).

37. *Dabistān,* Vol. III, p. 302.
38. *Qānūn-i-'Ishq, kāfī* 76.
See the work of Bāhū and Bullhe Shāh.
39. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb,* Vol. III, p. 387.
40. The grammatical system, however, was Indian.
41. With the exception of a few poems ascribed to Shakar Ganj, no trace of Ṣūfī poetry is found before Ibrāhīm Farīd.
42. From some neglected and worm-eatern and torn manuscrpits in private libraries, and from some lithographed books not very much read by the public. (Much was in oral form).
43. Union gained while living was of two natures, partial and complete. A partial union was possible when the Ṣūfī was in a state of supreme ecstasy. The complete union was attained (in very rare cases) when all consciousness of self was lost and the mystic lived ever after in and with the Universal Self.
44. In Persian poetry, for example, the Beloved is both Laila and Majanu.
45. Of these Hīra and Rañjhā and Sassī and Punnū in all probability were of Indo-Scythian origin, but the poets have overlaid them with Muslim coloures and superstitions.
46. Of the three, the Hīr and Rañjhā tale is the most important, and has been written by many poets, the best written up to date being *Hīr* of Vāre Shāh or Wāris Shāh.
47. Hīr has almost the same position in Puñjābi literature as Rādhā has in *Hindī* literature. (But love of Radha-Krishna is eternal and divine. They have been personified by saint-poets as Vishnu and Laxmi).
48. Aurangzeb considered the Ṣūfīs as heretics and was extremely harsh to them. Provincial governors and princes of the royal blood often followed his example during his reign, and afterwards foreign invasions by Nādir Shāh and Ahmad Shāh were also responsible, in great measure, for inflicting cruelties on them.
49. This in no way signifies that the poets believed in them. They made use of them to bring home to the people their deeply mystic thought in a simple manner.
50. Though the basic principles of the Puñjābī, musical; system are the same as those of the Indian system, yet it differs a good deal in details.
51. It is known as *Bāvan Akharī* on account of the 52 letters of the *Nāgarī* alphabet.
52. Hāshim and Alī Ḥaidar each wrote about half a dozen *sīharfīs.*
53. *Majmū'a Abyāt Sulṭān Bāhū.*
54. Jasmine
55. *Shāh rag* or *rag* is the great vein found in the neck and considered by the Pañjābī Ṣūfī to be nearest his mind.
56. Haidar's *sīharfīs* are noted for this.
57. Pañjābi poets other than Ṣūfīs, both Hindūs and Muhammadan, have written many such *sīharfīs.*
58. This *sīharfī,* written at Gujrat by Muhammad Dīn, describes the life of a Ṣūfī Murīd. It cannot be more than fifty years old.
59. See *sīharfīs* of Gaṅgā Rāma and that of Sāī Dāsa, on the Arabic alphabet.

60. Maīyā Singh's *Puñjābī Dictionary.*
61. For example, the famous *Vār of Bhāī Gurdās* in praise of the *Sikh Gurūs.*
62. Nānak is the only non Ṣūfī whose verse is esteemed in a like manner by the Puñjābī people. (Kabira the mystic poet is excellent in this tradition).
63. The office of *gaddī-nashīn*, which formerly was bestowed on one of the disciples, later on became hereditary in the families of the saints. Almost all *gaddī-nashīns* now inherit the seats as their birthright. (In Bhakti cult we find panths—like Kabirpanth, Ravidaspanth, Dadupanth etc.).
64. We mean the period when village and cottage industries flourished in Indian villages. People were happy and prosperous. The machine-made things were not imported from abroad, and during which the Ṣūfī poetry was composed.
65. Mr. Baden Powell, writing as late as the end of the nineteenth century, said that 'it is impossible to exclude any city or town from the list of cotton manufacturing localities in the Pañjāb'. Quoted by C. M. Birdwood in *The Industrial Arts of India*, p. 244.
66. In those days spinning was the greatest accomplishment of a young girl. Anyone not qualified in the art was looked down upon by her husband and members of his household. (Spinning wheel and the Handloom - Charkha and Kargha were the symbols of prosperity).
67. The world to the Ṣūfī was like a *goīl* for temporary stay.
68. A Ṣūfī in all humility calls himself a sweeper, and he calls the beliefs of different people the threshing floor, which he winnows to separate the right from the wrong.
69. Ṣūfī *jhāḍū* is wisdom.
70. The Puñjāb is extremely cold in winter and so people use *aṅgīṭhīs* to warm themśelves. The Ṣūfī's heart is an eternal *aṅgīṭhī* full of fire, i.e. separation's pangs. (Compare Kabir the eternal light is always burning).
71. In *Ṣūfī* language it is also love's flame which consumes the body.
72. Ignorance is a *Ṣūfī's ghuṇḍ.*
73. *Hīr Vāre Shāh*, p. I.
74. How closely the above resembles the following of Bullhe Shāh (*Qānūn-i-'Ishq, kāfī* 76) :

    Ishk dī navīō navī bahār,
    Ved Kurān paḍh thakke, sijjade kardiā ghas gaye mathe,
    Nā rabb tīrath nā rabb makke, jis pāiā tis nūr jamāl.

    Love ever has a new season (glory). Reading and studying the Vedas and *Qur'ān* (they) are tired. By bowing in obeisance the forehad is worn out. God is neither at a sanctuary nor in Mecca. One who has found (love), his light is powerful.
    (There are many verses of Kabir in this regard. Even more meaningful and powerful).

    Bāhū has said the same :

    Pe paḍh paḍh ilam hazār katābā ālam hoye sāre hū,
    Hikko haraf ishk dā nā paḍh jāṇṇ bhule phiṇ vicāre hū.

    (*Majmū'a Sultān Bāhū*, p. 6). *Pe* : reading and studying a thousand books, all have become knowers; one word of love they do not know

to read (hence) lost the poor ones walk astray. (Kabir : Pothi padh padh Jag muan pandit bhaya na koi, dhai Akhar prem ka padhe so pandit hoi).

75. *Candar Badan*, p. 7.
76. *Qissā Laḍāī Siṅghā*, p. 1.
77. *Ain-i-Akbarī*, Vol. III, p. 367.
78. Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Puñjāba*, Vol. III, p. 432.
79. This title originated from a miracle performed by him. It has many versions, one of which is that he was told by his mother that the reward of prayer was sugar. She used to hide some under his prayer-carpet, which the boy Farīd got after the prayer. One day, his mother went out and he had to pray alone. After his prayer, he lifted the carpet and found a great supply of sugar—a a miraculous gift of God. His mother was surprised on her return home and named him Śhakar Gañj or Treasure of Sugar.
80. *Ain-i-Akbarī* (English translation), Vol. III, p. 363. Garcin de Tassy translates it Ghanewāl.
81. Ibid.
82. Macauliffe states (*Sikh Religion*, Vol. VI, p. 367) that the name was changed on account of a canal in which it was usual of all who visited Farīd to wash their hands. This canal came to be known as *Bābā Sāhib kā Pāk Paṭan* or Farīd's cleansing ferry. This is not a satisfactory explanation. Ajodhan being the seat of Farīd was therefore known as Pāk Paṭan—holy town or city.
83. The sect maintained its integrity till very late, when it was split into two sub-orders, the Nizāmiās and the Ṣabīrias, the former from Nizāmu'ddīn Awliyā, a disciple of Farīdu'ddīn, and the latter from Ṣabīr, cousin and son-in-law of the founder (see Rose's *Glossary*, Vol. III, p. 432).
84. See *Gulzār-i-Farīdī*.
85. As quoted by Macauliffe in his *Sikha Religion*, Vol. VI, p. 348.
86. *Jwāhir-i-Farīdī*, p. 294 and *Gulzār-i-Farīdī*, p. 81.
87. We have been unable to find any trace of his tomb in Sirhind. In none of the old biographies of saints do we find that he died at Sirhind.
88. *Jawāhiri-i-Farīdī*p. 292.
89. He had two meetings with Nānak (see *Janam Sākhī Bālā* and the *Purātan*). The *Gulzār-i-Farīdī* is full of accounts of such interview.
90. These titles and appellations we have collected from the *Gulzār-i-Farīdī's* pages. Macauliffe also mentions them in his book, see *Sikh Religion*, Vol. VI. p. 102.
91. The *Gulzār-i-Farīdī* (p. 79) also calls him Brāhm or *Baram*. The *Janama Sākhīs* all call him Brāhm, see *Bālā-Janam Sākī*, p. 543.
92. Even Farīd the First was not altogether engaged in the work of conversion. His efforts were often supplemented by two factors :
(1) The political domination left the Hindūs helpless, especially economically. Economic difficulties therefore compelled them to embrace *Islām*, which at once raised their status. (Moreover Islam was against practice of caste system and untouchability, a curse in Hindu social order, therefore lower sections of society were attracted towards conversions).
Kabir however condemned caste system and practice of untouchability besides ritualism of both Hindus and Muhammadan and preached equality and communal harmony.

3

BHAKTI CULT AND KABĪR'S THEISTIC SECT

As discussed earlier, nirguna *Bhakti* cult came and spread in North India from South. And Kabir certainly popularised it. It was introduced by *Vaiṣṇava āchāryas* and gradually spread through devotionalism. Saint poets and *bhagats* mostly were from the lower castes, belonging to the artisan and peasantary stocks. Thus their interaction, popularity and influence among peasants, artisans and working class was tremendous and ever lasting.

"In fact *Bhakti* cult became a social movement. The *Bhakti* songs became a banner of revolt. The concept of personal God united the society and encouraged them to win over the frustration and miseries because of political slavery under Islamic powers. Its reformative outlook and social character inspired the common masses to realise and identify their strength while Kabīr, Ravidās and other *Bhakti* poets moulded it as a theistic sect and a social movement, Nānak took it to great heights and founded the Sikh reformative movement. In *Guru Grantha Sāheb*, the Holy book of the *Sikh* religion, in later times the hymns of Kabīr, Ravidās and other *bhagats* became like scriptures for the entire *Sikh* community as well as toiling masses, the proletariats. In fact *Bhakti* cult has been strengthened and popularised much by the *Sikh* tradition.

It is quite strange that in the tumultuous period of communal hatred, plunder, fire, insecurity, much demolition and annihilation Vaiṣṇav tradition produced great saints like Kabīr, Ravidās, Nāmdev, Tukārām, Dādū and several others. They were all simple and purest souls and perfect godliness in them inspired to rise above caste, creed and colour forgetting pride and prejudices. Most of them were from the downgraded sections of society."

"In medieval age *Bhakti* cult specially *Nirguṇa bhakti* of Kabīr and his contemporaries like Ravidās, Dhannā, Sena has been an era of national and emotional integration, unity of hearts, social interaction, feelings of oneness and social awakening, religious tolerance and egalitarianism. *Bhakti* was a total socio-religious movement in an age of feudal landlordism, rajas, maharajas, religious heads and Brahmin supremacy and above all continued foreign *Muslim* invasions. Liberal, simplest and ritual free *Bhakti* in the form of recitation or '*nāma japa*' of songs, *bhajans* and Vāṇīs attracted and kindled a ray of hope amongst the exploited *Śūdras*, toiling masses and the working class. *Bhakti* through 'divine love' also gave a rare delight to the frustrated and defeated race of *Hindūs*. It simultaneously as a peoples religious reform movement inspired the lower classes towards social unity and self-realisation. People forgot their pains and troubles experienced during struggles and wars between foreign invaders and the Kshatriyas. In due course of time the consequent hatred and aloofness could not continue for long. It took five hundred years when *Hindūs* and *Muslims* started believing each other and came closer through religious tolerance preached by Sufiism, Vaisnavism and *Bhakti* cult. *Muslims* looked to Allah, Hindūs to God.

Bhakti inspired optimism in *Hindūs*. It was the devotionalism of Kabīr and other *Bhakti*-poets which put a powerful brake to the Islamization of *Hindūs*. Liberal Sufiism and *Bhakti* cult encouraged the common masses to respect each other and fight against ignorance as well as social evils.

From the depressed classes both Kabīr and Ravidās are the two leading figures, the leaders of the *Bhakti* cult who made, it eternal and historic through their devotional songs which gave a new lease of life to the exploited masses."[1]

Roots of *Bhakti* Devotionalism

Historian Romila Thapar traces the roots of the *Bhakti* devotionalism in South. She observes the background of the *Bhakti* cult in the following words :

"*Vedic* culture was not the only type of culture which travelled South. In the sphere of religion, other groups either anti-*Vedic* or non-*Vedic* in feeling were also present. Apart from Jainism and Buddhism, there arrived the *Bhāgavata* and *Pāṣupata* cult, the cults of devotion to Viṣṇu and Śiva respectively—theism with an

emphasis on personal worship rather than sacrificial ritual—and these were to strike roots in the populace whilst royalty was busily concerning itself with *Vedic* ritual. Eventually, the devotional cult was to prove stronger than any other religious force in the South, and this was recognized even by royal patrons.

As a matter of fact Jainism and Buddhism had gradually to give way to a new form of religious worship, the devotional cults of the *Tamil* saints, which were among the early expressions of what later came to be called the *Bhakti* movement. The devotional aspect was formulated in a relationship between God and man based on love, a formulation which had not been so strongly stressed in earlier Hindū thought. The worshipper, recognizing a feeling of inadequacy, would declare his love for God who, it was believed, permitted a reciprocal relationship, described poignantly in one of the *Tamil* hymns:

> When you see his face praise him with joy,
> worship him with joined palms bow before him,
> so that his feet touch your head,
> Holy and mighty will be his form
> rising to heaven, but his sterner face
> will be hidden, and he will show you
> the form of a young man, fragrant and beautiful
> and his words will be loving and gracious—
> Don't be afraid—I knew you were coming.

Tamil devotionalism achieved a great wave of popularity in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. and was continued in the hymns and sermons of the *Nayanārs* (the Śaivite saints) and the *Alvars* (the Vaiṣṇavite saints). The hymns dedicated to Śiva and Viṣṇu have been preserved in two separate collections, the *Tirumurai* and the *Nalayiraprabandham.* Of the Śaivite saints the most popular were Appar (who is said to have converted the king Mahendra-Varmān), Sambandar, Manikkavasagar, and Sundarar. The *Vedic* gods were either denied or ignored, the emphasis being not on the object of worship but on the relationship involved in worship, the relationship between man and God.[2]

Manikkavasagar explains it in his hymns :

> Indra or Vishṇu or *Brahma*
> Their divine bliss crave not I
> I seek the love of thy saints

Though my house perish thereby.
To the worst hell will I go
So but thy grace be with me
Best of all, how could my heart

Think of a God beside There?...

I had no virtue, penance, knowledge, self-control
A doll to turn
At other's will I danced, whistled, fell. But me
He filled in every limb
With love's mad longing, and that I might climb
There whence there is no return.
He shewed His beauty, made me His. Ah me, when shall I go to Him

A similar feeling finds expressions in a hymn addressed to Viṣṇu (Vishnu) by Nammalvar :

Thou has't not yet been gracious enough to extend thy sympathy towards thy consort (the singer). Before she gives up her ghost in despair owing to thy indifference show so much at least of thy mercy as to send word to thy consort through thy messenger and vehicle Garuḍa, the store-house of kindness, not to pine away but to take courage a little, till
Thou, Lord and master, returnest as expected, which will assuredly take place soon.*[3]

The Saints made Man and God friendly. In fact God became patron, or the master of the true devotee.

Assimilation amongst *Hindūs* and *Muslims*

In the wake of Muslim invasions the society in North India had changed and from invaders, Muslims became rulers, emperors of India.

The age of saint-poets therefore was of social-transformation. The seat of power was in the hands of the Muslims. Lower classes were attracted to their religion. Conversions were taking place

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* The author in this case is a man, but feels himself in a feminine relationship towards his God."

and continued for quite some time : Muslim rulers encouraged their own theologists and *Brahmins* and upper castes were reduced in their status and influence. However the influence of Kabīr—Ravidās and other saints checked the trend of conversions, and assimilation amongst Hindūs and Muslims have started, in a big way.

As Romila Thapar[4] says : "By the sixteenth century a pattern of living had evolved in which appreciable degree of assimilation had taken place. Nevertheless amongsts the upper classes certain resentments remained. However free the Hindūs may have been in their daily life, theoretically they were not equal citizens with the Muslims. What ranked most was that socially the Indian Muslims may have been of a lower origin, and yet they were now in a superior position. Had the Muslims remained a foreign community there would have been a readier acceptance of their ideology by high caste Hindūs."

She further says : "In the process of preserving their exclusiveness, the *Brāhmans* concentrated upon their own internal resources and traditional literature. This led to a revival of the study of older texts, with detailed commentaries and digest. When the new rulers asked to see the legal basis and interpretation of Hindūism the *brāhmans* provided the material based on early texts, which dealt with a theoretically ideal state which envisaged no conflicting divisons within society. There was little or nc attempt to recognize, let alone come to terms with, a powerful group which did not fit a caste hierarchy.

The two dominant sects of Hinduism, the *Vaiṣṇavas* and the *Śaivas*, were the main props of *Hindūs* orthodoxy, though within these sects there were smaller groups with their own variations in belief. Vaiṣṇavism remair ed more popular in the north, although many of its leaders, such as Rāmānuja and Vallabha, had been teachers from South India. Their impact on the reformers of the *Vaiṣṇava* movement in the North was considerable. Some of these reformers have been associated with the *Bhakti* movement. But a distinction can be made between those whose teaching was influenced by Islamic ideas as well. The orientations of these two broad groups were significantly different, although the overall sentiment of their religious expression may have been similar. Some confined themselves to introducing a more personal element into Hindūs religious activity, particularly the *Vaiṣṇavas*.

Rāmānanda expresses it best :

> I had an inclination to go with sandal and other perfumes to offer my worship to *Brahman* [the god]. But the *guru* revealed that *Brahman* was in my own heart. Wherever I go I see only water and stones worshipped; but it is Thou who has filled them all with Thy presence. They all seek Thee in vain amongst the *Vedas*. My own true *guru*, Thou hast put an end to all my failures and illusions. Blessed art Thou. Rāmānanda is lost in his Master, *Brahman*, it is the word of *guru* that destroys all the million bonds of action.[5]

Because of frustration and oppression, Islamic supremacy and conversions, the *Bhakti* cult as a religious and social revolt had well spread over throughout the country. In North as stated earlier it came from South, where it had flourished for more than a millennia. Unity with god was common in *Bhakti* cult. Devotee was in direct touch of God.

Most of the *bhakts* and saints travelled far and wide on their religious tours reciting their devotional verses. There was no need to go to a priest, to visit a temple or shrine, to listen to the discourses of the *Brahmans*. Even idol worship was condemned. God was depicted as all powerful. He was very much within one's heart, therefore there was no reason to be afraid of any body.*

As historian Romila Thapar says : "The *Bhakti* saints, like those of the devotional cults, came from a diversity of backgrounds. Many were artisans by origin or belonged to the class of less prosperous cultivators. The occasional *brāhmaṇ* also joined the *Bhakti* movement, (actually started by the Brahmans) but by and large its adherents were from the lower castes. Institutionalized religion and objects of worship were attacked, caste disregarded, women were encouraged to join the gathering, and the teaching was entirely in the local vernacular language.

From the historical point of view the most significant contribution of the *Bhakti* movement during this period came from Kabīr and Nānak, who expressed the sentiments of the urban class in towns and of the artisans in the villages who were in contact with the towns. The ideas of Kabīr and Nānak were drawn from both the existing and the *Islamic* traditions, and the inclusion of

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* The leaders of Bhakti movement were called saints—the worthy and virtuous ones.

the latter makes them very different from the other leaders of the *Bhakti* movement. That this aspect of the movement was essentially urban based becomes evident on comparison with the earlier period, when the devotional cult was very much in the background, not having the support of a large urban class. The mystical sects were not essentially of urban origin.

Kabir (1440-1518) was an orphan and "his foster-father was a weaver, and consequently Kabīr was trained in the same lower-caste profession. His epxerience as a weaver was to provide him with many similes drawn from the weaver's craft when he came to compose his verses. He became a disciple of Rāmānanda, the *Vaiṣṇava* reformers, but eventually left him and began to preach his own ideas. Kabīr was concerned with much more than mere religious reform. He wished to change society. He expressed his ideas in single couplets which were easy to memorize and contained imagery which was commonly understood. His verses gathered into two collections on his death incorporate ideas.

Nānak (1469-1539) came of a rural background, being the son of a village accountant. He was educated through the generosity of a Muslim friend, and later was employed as a storekeeper in the Afghan administration. In spite of his having a wife and three children, he left them and joined the *Sufis*. But after a while he left the *Sufis* perhaps because of Muslim supremacy and travelled throughout the subcontinent; he is also believed to have visited Mecca. Finally, he rejoined his family and settled in a village in the Puñjāb, where he preached, gathered his disciples, and eventually died. His teachings are contained in the *Ādi-Granth*.

With Kabīr and Nānak the *Bhakti* movement took a new turn. Their was neither an attempt to reform institutionalized Hinduism by attacking the system of worship, nor a means of escape through submerging consciousness in devotion. The new attitude can perhaps best be understood in the idea of God as described by Kabīr and Nānak. Kabīr either denied the *Hindū* and *Muslim* ideas of God or else equated them by stating that they were identical."[6]

"O servant, where dost thou seek Me :
Lo, I am beside thee.

I am neither in temple nor in mosque : I am neither in *Kaaba** nor in *Kailash* :*
Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in *Yoga* and renunciation.
If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me : thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time.
Kabīr says, 'O Sadhu, God is the breath of all breath.'

*

If God be within the mosque, then to whom does this world belong?
If Rāma* be within the image which you find upon your pilgrimage, then who is there to know what happens without?
Hari is in the East; Allah is in the West. Look within your heart, for there you will find both Karim† and Rāma;
All the men and women in the world are His living forms.
Kabīr is the child of Allah and of Ram : He is my guru, He is my Pir.

Nānak went a step further and described God without reference to either Hindū or Muslim conceptions.

The True One was in the beginning, the True One was in the primal age,
The True One is now also, O Nānak; the True One also shall be.
By His order bodies are produced; His order cannot be described.
By His order souls are infused into them; by His order greatness is obtained.
By His order men are high or low; by His order they obtain pre-ordained pain or pleasure.
By His order some obtain their rewards; by His order others must ever wander in transmigration.
All are subject to His order; none is exempt from it.

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* The Kaaba is the sanctuary in Mecca containing the sacred Black Stone of the Muslims, Kailash is the mountain as the abode of Shiva. (Now in Tibet)
* Ram, the hero of the *Ramayana*, was worshipped as an incarnation of Vishnu.
† Karim is a title of Allah in Islam.

He who understands God's O Nānak, is never guilty of egoism."[7]

In the words of Thapar Kabīr and Nānak were not trying to bridge the gulf between Hindūs and Muslims by means of an eclectic ideology which deliberately combined facets of both faiths. Such an idea was yet to come in the *Din-i-Illahi* of the emperor Akbar. Kabīr and Nānak were leading a new religious group in which God was not merely a remodelled version of the concept of Rāma or of Allah, but a new concept. This concept was derived from the two existing religious forces, but neither of them consciously tried to combine and reconcile them. This would explain the sharp antagonism of the *Brāhmaṇs* and *Ulema* against these two *Bhakti* leaders in particular, since they saw them as the propagators of new religions."[8]

"The followers of Kabīr and Nānak founded independent religious communities—the Kabīrpanthis and the *Sikhs*. Both won large following from amongst the artisans and the cultivators to whom the emphasis on simple living and an absence of incomprehensible ritual made a strong appeal. There was also much honest common sense and practicality in the writings of both men, extreme patterns of living being rejected in favour of normal balanced life as a part of the society in which one is born. For instance, the *yogī* who enjoys demonstrating his excessive detachment from life is ridiculed by Kabīr.[9] But Kabir very well knew that Gorakhanatha and Natha tradition was against caste system, ritualism and untouchability. During his time Yogis and Naths became tantriks and emerged in show business of yogic powers.

However, the popularity of these new orders was not due to religious reasons alone. Kabīr and Nānak were concerned with the conditions of Indian society, where both caste and the distinctions between *Hindū* and *Muslim*, as expressed in organized religion, kept men apart. Their stress was on a reordering of society on egalitarian lines and not the mere co-existence of differing ideologies. The call to social equality was a powerful magnet, and expressed itself in the firm denunciation of caste by both Kabīr and Nānak. One of the methods of escaping caste was by joining a non-caste group in which one's caste would be eliminated, as had happened in the past with certain sects and cults. What Kabīr and Nānak had to say about caste must have met with an instan-

taneous response from the artisans, who suffered the contempt of both higher-caste *Hindūs* and upper-class *Muslims.*

That the *Sikhs* survived as an independent religious community more successfully than the *Kabīrapanthīs* resulted largely from the differences between their teachings. Kabīr may have been indifferent to the Hindūs and Muslim God, but the repeated reference to God by names familiar to these two religions tended to associate him with the less orthodox members of both religions. In time, the *Kabīrapanthis* came to be regarded as a Hindū sect, although the name Kabīr itself remains a common Muslim name today."[10]

Theistic Sect of Kabīr

The voice of Kabīr was more powerful among the artisans and cultivators, specially belonging to the lower classes. It was a voice of revolt against ritualism and Brahmin-Maulavi's supremacy.[11] As a rebel he condemned idolatry, caste hierarchy and priesthood.

As Monier Williams observes : There can be no doubt that the teaching of Ḳabīr exercised a most important influence throughout Upper India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. That it formed the basis of the *Sikh* movement in the Pañjāb is clear from the fact that Kabīr's sayings are constantly quoted by the Guru Nānak and his succesors, the authors of the sacred writings which constitute the bible (*Grantha*) of the *Sikh* religion." Guru-Grantha is as sacred as Veda-Puranas to Hindus, Bible to Christians and Quran to Muslims.

Kabīr was a weaver and he was proud of his profession. He is believed to have lived partly at Benares and partly at Magahar, near Gorakphur, in the reign of Sikandar Shāh Lodi, between 1488 and 1512. According to a legend he was miraculously conceived by the virgin widow. His name Kabīr is an Arabic word meaning 'Great'. He never had any sympathy with Muhammadan intolerance and exclusiveness. It is certain that in the end he became a pupil of Rāmānanda and for a time a true *Hindū*, and, what is important to bear in mind, a true *Vaiṣṇava*, who, like other *Vaiṣṇava* leaders, had much of the democratic, tolerant, and liberal spritit of Buddhism. No wonder, then, that he laboured to free the *Vaiṣṇava* creed from the useless and senseless frustations with which it had become overlaid. But he did more than other Vaiṣṇava reformers. He de-

nounced all idol-worship and taught Vaiṣṇavism as a form of strict monotheism. True religions, according to Kabīr, meant really nothing but devotion to one God, who is called by the name Viṣṇu, or by synonyms of *Viṣṇu* such as Rāma and *Hari*, or even by the names current among Muhammadans. For Kabīr, in his tolerance, had no objection to regard Muhmamadans as worshipping the same God under a different name. In this way he was the first to attempt a partial bridging of the gulf betwen *Hindūism* and *Islām*. Nor did he reject all the pantheistic ideas of Brāhmaṇism.[12]

We have already noted how in India all phases of religious belief are constantly meeting and partially fusing into each other. Polytheism is continually sliding into Monotheism, Monotheism into Pantheism, and then again into Polytheism. *Vaiṣṇavism* and *Śaivism* in their universal receptivity are open to impressions from *Islām*; Islām, notwithstanding its exclusiveness, is adulterated with *Vaiṣṇavism* and *Śaivism*. Hence it happens that *Vaiṣṇavism* and *Śaivism*, however decidedly they may insist on the separate personality of the Godhead, are perpetually slipping back, like a broad wheel, into the old Pantheistic rut. And *Islām*, however uncompromising its view of the Unity of the Deity, has its school of Sūfī philosophers, who hold opinions almost identical with those of the *Vedānta* Pantheists. It is no matter of wonder, therefore, that Kabīr—while asserting the Unity of God, the Creator of the world, is admitted to have attributes and qualities and to assume any shape at will—also maintained that God and man are parts of one essence, and that 'both are in the same manner everything that lives and moves and has its being.'

Kabīr's adherents—still very numerous in Northern India—are generally called *Kabīrpanthīs*. His doctrines and precepts are embodied in the Kabira-Bijaka, *Sukh-nidhāna* and other *Hindī* works, as well as in the *Sikh Grantha*. His successors have added precepts of their own, many of which are attributed to Kabīr. His alleged sayings are innumerable :

** ** **

Hear my word; go not astray.
My word is from the first. Meditate on it every moment.
Without hearing the word, all is utter darkness. Without finding the gateway of the word, man will ever go astray.

There are many words. Take the pith of them.
Lay in provender suffcient for the road while time yet serves. Evening comes on, the day is flown and nothing will be provided.
With the five elements is the abode of a great mystery. When the body is decomposed has any one found it? The word of the teacher is the guide.
That a drop falls into the ocean all can perceive; but that the drop and the ocean are one, few can comprehend.
The dwelling of Kabīr is on the peak of a mountain, a narrow path leads to it.
No act of devotion can equal truth; no crime is so heinous as falsehood; in the heart where truth abides, there is my abode.
Put a check upon the tongue; speak not much. Associate with the wise. Investigate the words of the teacher.
When the master is blind, what is to become of the scholar? When the blind leads the blind both will fall into the well.

It is evident from these examples that the key-note of Kabīr's teaching was the duty of obeying spiritual teachers. He maintained, in fact, that every man was bound to search for a true and trustworthy spiritual pastor (*Guru*), and, having found one, to make him his master—to submit mind, conscience, and even body to his will and guidance. Yet he never claimed infallibility for his own utterances. He constantly warned his own disciples to investigate for themselves the truth of every word he uttered.

And this leads us to the religious system founded in the Punjab by Kabīr's most celebrated follower Nānak, about the time of the Emperor Bābur."[13]

Though Kabir did not started any sect or religion but he inspired some of his disciples to keep alive his traditions.

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4

KABĪR A DYNAMIC PERSONALITY

Mystic poet Kabīr is a thinker, a social reformer and manyfaceted personality of medieval age. As a philosopher synthesizer of non-Brahmanical and non-Islamic religious culture, he speaks on a wide range of themes and problems like mysticism, ethics, social evils, religious reforms and ultimately union with God. He seems more practical than any religious teacher of the past. He is virtually peoples philosopher. Learned scholars are mad after him, his teachings and thought. He exposes the reality of the world in simplest language, spoken by the common masses of Eastern Uttar Pradesh, through mystic terminology. He attacks on Hindu priestcraft and calls Islamic way of worship as fake. He condemns social customs, untouchability, social degradation on caste lines, being the creation of the Brahmans. He is firm and fearless in his views, in his personal life and his character is of a great social-religious reformer. He practices, whatever he teaches.

He says that worldly pleasures are all creations of Māyā, the illusion which is a hindrance in the discovery of God, true union with the Supreme Being. He believes in an all powerful God who has saved all the sages, saints, pious-rightful souls in the past.

He gives a call, which is an eye opener, that only those should accompany him who have burnt their own houses or have left the world or all the worldly belongings. Only such a person can join his *panth* :

Kabīra khaḍā bazar main
liye lukāṭhī hāth
Jo ghar jāre āpanā
chale hamāre sāth.

(Kabīra fearlessly says standing in the open market, that only those can accompany him who have burnt their houses or in other words have disowned worldly pleasures or Maya).

Kabīr as a *nirgunia*, a true devotee of formless Supreme Master, challenges the *Brahmans* and the *Muslim* Pirs and Maulavis for their ignorance, religious sins and oppressive nature towards poor and the lower classes. He has deep knowledge of scriptures but rejects their usefulness as they do not serve the cause of the poor and the needy. In the past they were denied knowledge. Therefore he says that it is love to God, love to humanity which makes someone a learned man.

It is strange, some Indian and foreign writers have wasted much of their valuable times in ascertaining the caste and the date of birth of Kabīr, rather then studying his ideology of social equality and social justice. Indian writers of high castes try to prove him as an abandoned child of a *brahmin* widow or a *Muslim* convert *Julaha*. The foreign scholars on the basis of quite fake and spurious references of the vested interests, prove him as a Muhammedan and a Sufi. For his large followers it is all rubbish and unbelievable.

Here are few examples :

Jagjivan Ram : Kori (Weaver)

Vidyāvati Malvika : *Kori*—Ancient *Koli*—*Koliya*—known as *Julaha* also (Thus *Kori-Julaha*). Buddha's mother and wife were of Koli-Koliya clan.

Mahant B. D. *Kabīrpanthi* : *Kori*
(President : All India Kabir Panthi Mahasabha, New Delhi and World *Kabīrapanthin Mahāsabhā*), Mauritius. (Kabīra says—*Sute Suta milaye Kori* : Kori weaves mixing yarn together)

Sant Rām Dās, Magahar : *Hindū Kori* (weaver)

K.L. Chanchreek : *Hindū Kori* (*Koli*). (*Kori*) word has been corrupted as *Julaha* in some texts by vested interests and foreign authors who often have quoted from such sources. Writers and researchers belonging to upper castes are interested in creating caste confusion saying him Julaha—Hindu Kori convert (Momin-Ansari weaver).

Mata Prasad Gupta : *Kori* (*Julaha*) belonging to lower caste.

Kalika Prasad, IAS—Kori/Koli (Weaver)

There is no doubt that Kabir is a Kori (weaver) which is synonym to *Koli* (*Koliya*), an ancient *Kṣatriya* tribe, the Buddha belongs. Conceptually, the upper caste writers with limited knowledge of historical facts about castes have tried to degrade Kabīr proving him a *Hindū Kori* convert to *Islam* or expressed doubts whether he was a *Muslim* weaver and so on, without any historical truth.

While *true Kabīrpanthīs* world wide are holding national, inter national meets on Kabīr philosophy, some of our writers are busy in the discovery of caste, place and date of birth of this great *Kori* mystic poet and reformer. For example to make much discovery of Gandhi and Lohia as a Bania, Ambedkar as an untouchable *Mahar* or Jagjivan Ram as *Chamar* will not yield fruitful meaning; what is more important is their ideology and statesmanship, their patriotism and sacrifices to the country. A follower of Kabır, Dr. Ambedkar has become immortal.

It is worth mentioning that once well known politician of Puñjāb and President of India Gyani Zail Singh inaugurating the International Seminar on Kabīr Philosophy in New Delhi declared that Kabīr, a renowned *bhagat* of sant tradition was a *Kori*, who saved Hinduism from Islamization in the medieval period of history. The seminar was organised by this author* and Mahant B.D. *Kabīrpanthī* and attended by delegates from all over the world. Further Gyaniji said that *Kabīr vāṇī* in *Guru Granth Saheb* is like sweet breeze of universal brotherhood, communal harmony, sacrifices, dedication and emotional integration.

Undoubtedly, prophets and sants are known by their message of love, not by caste and creed they belong.

Discovery of Kabīr

In Hindi there are several works of importance. In English Vaudeville has written a marvellous research work on Kabir.

Charlotte Vaudeville has certainly made an elaborate study of Kabīr and has tried to consult all the available sources, references and evidences eventhough she could not cross the Brāhmaṇic line of proving him a *Muslim* weaver (*Julaha*) In this chapter most of the references have been taken from her book. Vaudeville critically examines. "Kabīr is one of the best-known and most revered names in Indian tradition. From the Panjab to Bengal and from

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* K.L. Chanchreck and Mahant B.D. Kabīrapanthī.

the Himalayan frontiers to South India, he has long been hailed by *Hindūs* and *Muslims* alike as a great mystic and bold religious reformer. His name has travelled far and wide in the Indian subcontinent and, thanks to the admiration of Mahātmā Gāndhī and Rabindranāth Tagore, he is not completely unknown even in the West today. In the literary field too, Kabīr ranks very high: he has been hailed as 'the father of '*Hindī literature*' and even sometimes placed on a par with the greatest *Hindī* poet, Tulsīdās, the author of the *Hindī Rāmāyaṇa*, 'the Bible of Northern India.†

Undoubtedly in Indian religious history, Kabīr is unique: to the Hindūs, he is a *Vaiṣṇav bhakta*, to the *Muslims* a *pīr*, to the *Sikhs* a bhagat, to the sectarian *Kabīr-panthīs* an *avatāra* of the Supreme Being. To modern patriots, Kabīr is the champion of Hindu-Muslim unity, to neo-Vedāntists a promoter of the Univeral Religion or the 'Religion of Man', he who steadfastly opposed the superstitious beliefs and empty ritualism of orthodox Hindūism as well as the dogmatic pride and bigotry of orthodox *Islam*. In modern, progressive circles today, Kabīr is held in high esteem as a social reformer, a bold enemy of Brahmanical pride and caste distinctions, a revolutionary whose scathing attacks on caste prejudices, the principle of untouchability and all form of social discriminations are for ever famous and comforting to the enlightened Indian mind, like a breeze of fresh air. To modern India, Kabīr appears as a symbol of nonconformity, of all that is free, noble an challenging in the Indian tradition. Some contemporary Indian writers have not hesitated to compare him to the Buddha Gautam for the fearlessness of his character, the loftiness of his view, and his extraordinary hold on the common masses of India.

But Kabīr, unlike the *Buddha*, was not born a prince: he was neither scholar, nor aristocrat, but at the same time a *Shūdra* (of non-Āryan, impure descent) and a *mleccha*, a '*barbarian*', since the social group to which he belonged was already Islamized.

Both tradition and Kabīr's own words attest that he was born a poor *Julāhā*—a weaver of the ancient Kāśhī, the modern Benares. He never had access to Saṁskṛta scriptures of Sanskrit knowledge and he was most probably illiterate. Kabīr's *bānīs*, or 'sayings', so popular among the Indian masses, are expressed in the vulgar tongue, a rough idiom which appears as a form of old *Hindūi* or

† Vaudeville, Charlotte : Discovery of Kabīr Part I—Introduction, p. 11).

Hindī: the very roughness of his idiom enhances the striking forcefulness of his style and reveals the fervour of his conviction, the depth of his mystical awareness. The British scholar J.N. Farquhar was surely not far from the mark when he said of Kabīr: "His best utterances are probably the loftiest work in the *Hindī* language and hundreds of his couplets have laid hold of the common heart of *Hindūstan*".[1]

The impact of Kabīr's sayings on the masses of Northern India has been profound and not to be disregarded by historians of Hindūism. In *Medieval Mysticism of India*, a work largely based on the popular saying and songs carried by the itinerant *sādhus* of Northern India, the Beṅgālī scholar Kṣiti Mohan Sen had testified to the depth of Kabīr's impact on the common folk: "Kabīr's superior spiritual achievements came to have a soverign influence on the people of the Indian medieval times. Kabīr's influence, direct or indirect, on all liberal movements which occurred in the medieval times after him is uncommonly deep".[2]

Kabīr and his large followers, the Kabīrpanthis have attracted the attention of Indian as well as foreign scholars during the colonial rule when spread of education took its roots. Though Kabīrpanthīs belong to various castes but most of them were from the lower class. But they discouraged caste distinctions and the Panth maintained a secular character. Vaudeville observes :

Kabīr's great voice and remarkable hold on the Northern Indian masses did not pass unnoticed by western scholars who, from the end of the eighteenth century, applied themselves to the study of Indian traditions and literature. Their attention seems to have been early attracted by the existence of a well-developed sect bearing his name, the Kabīrpanthī sect, who claims to be followers of the *panth*, or the spiritual 'path' shown by Kabīr himself.

The *Kabīrpanthīs* own a number of religious establishments or *maṭhs*, spread over Northern and Central India, one of their main centres being in Benares itself, at '*Kabīra Chaurā*'.[3] Though they consider themselves as *Hindūs*, the *Kabīr-panthīs* are remarkable for their opposition to idol worship, their strong monotheism, the uprightness of their moral code, as well as their opposition to caste distinctions. Those characteristics earned them the respect and attention of the small number of Protestant missionaries and British officials who came into contact with them. From the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, the interest in the

Kabīrapanthīs, as well as in the mysterious personality of their purported founder, steadily increased in missionary circle, as western scholars began to recognize in Kabīr one of the greatest mystics and religious reformers in India.

The real pioneer in 'Kabīraian' studies, however, seems to have been an Italian Capuchin monk, Padre (Padri) Marco della Tomba[4], who arrived in India in 1758 and returned to Rome in 1775.

Padre Marco translated Satnaus Cabir[5] (*Satnāma* Kabīr) in Italian. According to him, supreme deity was eight armed Bavani (Bhavani) and God Nārayaṇa created the world.

He remarks that Kabīr's ideas are fundementally Buddhist and that his rejection of caste, scripture and Brāhmaṇical practices and ritual had their sources in Buddhism, which had survived for a long time in the Easter region of Tirhut and the Nepalese border, where Bettia is situated.

Remarking on the strange attempts found in the *Gyāna sāgara* to 'Kabīraize' local cults and beliefs and to roll Viṣṇu, Rāma and the Buddha into one divine Being indentified with Kabīr, de Gubernatis nevertheless suspected the authenticity of the evidence collected by Padre Marco della Tomba. He warns that we should not try to derive all Kabīr's doctrines from it, but wait for more evidence.[6]

In the last years of the eighteenth century, in Calcutta, Dr. J.B. Gilchrist had laready heard of Kabīr's outstanding personality and of his famous utterances, as he mentions him in his '*Hindostanee* Grammar': "That famous Indian sage who lived in the humble condition of a weaver expressed sentiments and did actions which would have honoured the most illustrious men".[7]

In Calcutta again, in 1812, Malcolm published his *Sketch of the Sikhs*, largely based on the material he had collected in the Panjab. According to his Sikh sources, Nānak, the founder of Sikhism, "constantly referred to the admired writings of the celebrated Muhammedan Kabīr".[8]

According to Malcolm further *Muhammedans* and *Hindūs* tolerated each other.[9] Kabīr was held in high esteem.[10] Vaudeville making more research and discovery further quotes W. Price's Hindi-*Hindūstani* selections including Rekhtas of Kabeer, with Nābhāji's *Bhaktamāl's* popular stanza. He also mentions General Harriott's Memoirs on Kabīrpanthīs published in 1832.[11]

Indian writes, specially *Hindī* scholars write quite differently on Kabīr, whereas western scholars quote paras available in European languages. But all these researches or sketchy works on Kabīr are not always very so authentic as much field work of the oral Kabīr tradition was never conducted by the European scholars.

According to Vaudeville, Harriott had conversations with *Kabīrpanthīs* in Bihar and Malwā who were decent people."

General Harriott seems to have been the first western scholar to note a resemblance between the *śabda* doctrine of Kabīr and the platonic *logos*[12]—an idea which was to be developed later by Westcott and Grierson. Comparing the *Kabīrpanthīs* with the Sikhs, Harriott expressed the opinion that the principal object of Kabīr's as well as of Nānak's reform was to exclude all forms of idol-worship." Even caste distinctions.

In H.H. Wilson's *Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindūs*, which appeared in 1862 but was based on previous essays published in 1828 and 1832 in *Asiatic Researches*, we find the first serious attempt to disentangle the mass of legendary traditions surrounding Kabīr. Quoting from the narrative of Kabīr's biography as it appears in Nābhājī's *Bhaktamāla* and in its commentary published by W. Price, Wilson gives a brief account of Kabīr's life in the Hindū tradition,[13] how he was miraculously born from a *Brahmin* virgin widow by saint Rāmānand's blessing; how he was exposed on a lake, then later found by the wife of a *Mohammedan* weaver and brought up by the couple as their own child; inflamed with the love of Rāma, Kabīr used a strategem to become Rāmānand's disciple, in spite of his being accounted as an 'impure Muhammedan'; he was persecuted by the cruel emperor Sikander Lodī, who nevertheless failed in his attempts to have him put to death, owing to Kabīr's display of his own supernatural powers.

But surely Kabipanthis do believe that Kabir was not a child born of a Brahman widow, but a son of a Hindu Kori weaver, who gave him to a childless Muhammedan family, which is a practice found in Koris.

The most remarkable story—and by far the most famous—concerns Kabīr's passing away and his double funeral: feeling his end at hand, the saint demanded to be left alone in a hut where he lay covered with a single cloth, whilst his Hindū and Muhammedan disciples hotly contested the right to dispose of his body according to the rites of their respective religions. But, when

the cloth which concealed Kabīr's mortal remains was lifted, nothing was found but a spray of flowers. One half of the flowers went to the Rājā of Benares, Vīr Singh, who had them cremated in the Hindū fashion, whilst the other half went to the *Pathan* noble Bijlī Khān, the head of the *Muhammedan* party, who buried them on the spot, at Magahar, near Gorakhpur. Magahar is generally acknowledged to be the place of Kabīr's *samādhi*, or memorial, built over the ashes of the flowers secured by the Hindū Rājā.

Wilson approaches his sources with caution and expresses great doubt as to the historical character of the stories. But he also rejects Malcom's assertion that Kabīr had been a *Muhammedan* and a *Sūfī*. According to Wilson, "His (Kabīra's) conversancy with the *Hindū śāstras* and his evidently limited knowledge of the Muhammedan authorities in matters of religions renders such a supposition perfectly unwarrantable". For Wilson,[14] therefore, Kabīr must have been a Hindū (Kori weaver). On Kabīr's dates, Wilson's guess is that he flourished about the beginning of the fifteenth century and that his religious innovations were connected with the previous exertions of Rāmānand, whom he tentatively places in the fourteenth century.

Wilson on Kabīr

It should be taken for granted that foreign authors are not always correct in their conclusions. Here Wilson's remarks in the footnote are not accurate. It is strange and painful that a learned scholar Wilson doubts the very existence of Kabīr in his "Religious Sect of the Hindūs. (RSH-p. 36)[15]

No Indian writer has written that Kabīr did not exist in the medieval period of history. At this stage we should not take Wilson seriously. However as Wilson declares Kabīr was a Hindū weaver. When it is so he was surely a *Kori* weaver.

We also see that Kabīr's caste has been questioned by the scholars, though he was a *Kori* (Koli) or Hindū *Julaha*. His date of birth has also been questioned and confused alongwith his place of birth and parentage. The *Kabīrpanthīs* do not bother about these useless remarks and always consider him a prophet, a path finder, a saviour of humanity though like Christ he was subject to all sorts of troubles. His voice is certainly a voice of revolt, quite fearless and sacred. Wilson has not dared to declare that Maghar was not the place where he died peacefully preaching universalism.

one mighty god, uselessness of ritualism and priestcraft. He was ahead of his age. And even today he is considered a rebel and progressive reformer.

The Bījaka or Eastern Tradition of Kabīr's Works

Vaudeville further writes that : "Wilson's account shows that he was fairly well acquainted with the *Kabīrpanthī* traditions, especially with those found in the *Kabīra Chaurā maṭh* in Benares. He gives a list of works attributed to Kabīr which are found in the large compilation called *Khās Grantha* and preserved there. The latest work on the list, and by far the most important, is the *Bījaka*. Wilson gives a rough account of the contents and remarks on its obscurtiy. But he rightly accords much importance to the collection of distichs or *sākhīs* it contains, because of their popularity "even among those who are not Kabīr's followers". Wilson's account and his English translations of one hundred *sākhīs* from the *Bījaka* were the source of most of what was known and said about Kabīra, at least in the western world, till the first decade of the twentieth century.

In the first edition of his famous *Histoire de la litterature Hindouie et Hindoustanie*, Garcin de Tassy[16] gave a brief account of Kabir, quoting Harriott. Price and Wilson. In the second edition, he added a French translation of the 'verse about Kabīr in Nābhājī's *Bhaktamāl* and its commentary as given by Price.[17] In spite of the legendary character of the narrative, Garcin clearly discerned the importance of Kabīr in Indian religious history. He also referred to the testimony of Abū'l Fazl, who had mentioned Kabīr in the *Ā* 'in-i-Akbarī. Garcin admits with Malcolm—and against Wilson—that Kabīr was born a Muhammedan, though he was venerated by *Hindus* and *Muslims* alike, a unique distinction.

In his *Indian Empire*,[18] Hunter mentions Kabīr only breifly, relying on Wilson, but with the curious addition that Kabīr had carried Rāmānand's doctrine throughout Bengal. According to Hunter, Kabīr who lived about the fifteenth century, "had tried to build up a religion that should emrace *Hindūs* and *Muslims* alike." Hunter, therefore, goes one step further than Malcolm in asserting that Kabīr not only "inculcated religious toleration", but that he actually strove for the building up of some syncretic religion. Hunter's sources here appears to be a tradition already current in Bengal in the nineteenth century.

One should not forget that Kashi priests forced him to leave Benares and as a protest he came to Magahar to live in, then how he should not be declared by them a Muhammedan and a son of a widow and foster son of a Julaha. A prophet without a father his life story is similar to Christ in on way or the other and foreign scholars have not taken note of these facts.

2. *The Ādi Grantha of the Ṣikhs*

Adi Grantha is a historic religious scripture of the Sikhs.

"In 1877, a German missionary, E. Trumpp, published the first (incomplete) translation of the Sacred Book of the Sikhs, the *Ādi Grantha*[19] or *Guru Grantha*, including a part of the *padas* of the *Bhagats* (*bhakta*) or 'Saints', which are found in the *Grantha*, and the *saloks* (*śloks*) of Kabīr and Shaykh (Shekh) Farīd.[20] In his preface, Trumpp details the extreme difficulties he encountered in deciphering the holy *Grantha*, with the help of two *Sikha Granthis*.[21] Though he passed severe judgements on the Sikhs of the time, who, according to him "had lost all learning", Trumpp clearly recognized the importance of the Grantha in the linguistic line "as being the treasury of old *Hindui* dialects". He also showed a partiality towards the poems of Kabīr, which he judged "far superior in form as well as in orginality of thought to the versifications of the *Sikh Gurus*". It must be said that Trumpp's painstaking attempt at translating the Granth does not read too well English, and his translations of Kabīr's *padas* and *slokas* are very often wrong. Yet, he did some pioneering work in the field in so far as he revealed a collection of Kabīr's sayings not found in the *Bījaka*.

Vaudeville further writes that towards the end of the nineteenth century and during the first two decades of the twentieth century, not only the *Kabīrpanthīs* but Kabīr himself, his message and his personality, became an object of growing interest on the part of a new group of Indian and British scholars who were mostly Protestant missionaries. All Kabīr's utterances which they came to hear to struck them as having a decidedly Christian ring, and his spiritual message aroused their enthusiasm. In this group were the Revd. Prem Chand, the Revd. Ahmed Shah, Bishop Westcott, and the great linguist George Grierson. In 1890, the Revd. Prem Chand, a Baptist missionary of Monghyr now in Bihar, brought out an edition of the *Bījaka*; in the short English Preface to that edition, he alludes to the possibility of a Chirstian influence on

Kabīr. Prem Chand held that Kabīr "had some knowledge of Christian truth, which made him think of the brotherhood of man", and "that his moral teachings correspond with the teachings of the Bible". Moreover, he expressed the opinion that the *Bījaka* was corrupted "by the Vaiṣṇavas and pantheists", who had inserted in it dogmas peculiar to their sect.

It is interesting to note that Prem Chand was not alone in holding such views. In 1881, Paṇḍit Walji Bhāī, Pastor of a small Irish Presbyterian Congregation in Gujarat, had published in Gujarati an exposition of his views on *Kabīr* under the title of *Kabīr caritra.*[22] According to him, not only were current *Kabīrpanthī* doctrines quite similar to Christian beliefs and practices, but the *Kabīrpantha* itself was actually instituted by Jesuits! Bishop Westcott, who admits that he had "some interesting correspondence with Walji Bhai", wryly adds that "the Pandit's writings are not marked by any great critical acumen"[23]. This trend of thought must have been fairly common among Indian clergymen, who were familiar with Kabīr's words as quoted by the people and naturally inclined to take a Christian view of their meaning. In 1903, in Allahabad, a Hindī work called *Kabīrajñāna, ṭīkā-sahit*, was published by one Sukhadeva Prasād, giving some extracts of Kabīr's teachings with brief commentaries showing the corresponding teachings in the Christian Holy Scriptures. The book was re-edited several times : the appearance of a fifth edition in 1914, in Lucknow, testifies to its success. In 1911, the Revd. Prem Chand himself brought out the first complete English translation in his own edition of the *Bījaka*[24]—a commendable if not a very successful effort.

In his well-known study on *Kabīr and the Kabīrpanth*, first published in 1907 from the Christ Church Mission Press, Kanpur, Bishop Westcott expresses confused view of Kabīr which comes near to that of Malcolm :

> We are inclined to accept both of the theories advanced by Malcolm and to believe that not only Kabīr was a Muhamnedan by birth but also that he was associated with the Sufi order; and that the great object of his life was to break down the barriers that separated Hindūs from Muhammedans.

In the preface to the same edition, Westcott ventures the opinon that "we have probably in the *Kabīr Pantha* a religious system that owes something to *Hindūs*, Muhammedan and Christian in-

fluences". This judgement apparently reflects the views held by the Indian clergymen quoted above, and it may also have been influenced by the opinion of Grierson, expressed in an article on *Modern Hindūism and its Debt to the Historians*,[25] upon the development of Indian *Bhakti*. In the same article, Grierson declares that "Kabīr's doctrine of the Word (*Śabda*) is a remarkable copy of the opening verses of St. John's Gospel". Westcott himself, however, seems to have been reluctant to accept those views. In the chapter entitled 'Early Christian influences in Northern India', he readily acknowledges that he knows nothing about the works accomplished by Christian missionaries in Northern India, prior to the dispatch of the Emperor Akbar's famous embassy to Goa in 1579. Referring to Grierson's paper, Westcott merely ventures to say that "Christian thought in varying degrees of purity may have penetrated regions unvisited by professing Christians."[26] Later, however, he may have come closer to accepting Grierson's view. In an additional note to the fourth chapter of the same work, after exposing briefly 'the doctrine of Śabda', he adds: "It is not improbable that this doctrine, as set forth in the literature on the Kabīr-panth, has been influenced by the writings of St John".[27]

The question of the Christian influences that might have affected certain aspects of Kabīr's thought or might explain certain *Kabīrpanthī* was again discussed briefly by Macnicol in his book, *Indian Theism*.[28] But it seems to be a guess work of foreign writers, having little truth. Whatever priestly classes told they just copied it.

Macauliffe himself was not a missionary like Trumpp or Westcott, but he had long served in India as a magistrate and his avowed aim was to soothe the injured feelings of the orthodox Sikhs, who had rejected Trumpp's translation as "not only generally incorrect but injurious to our religion".[29] Macauliffe, therefore, has taken great care to follow the interpretations of the *Jñānīs* (Gyanis), the representatives of *Sikh* orthodoxy. His avowed aim was to foster the loyalty of the *Sikh* soldiery to Her Majesty the Queen and Empress of India, by acquainting the British officers with their subordinates' religion. It is curious to see the superior interests of the British Rāj concurring with Protestant missionary zeal in fostering '*Kabīrian*' research...[30] A close examination of Macauliffe's translation of the *Ādi Grantha* or *Gurū Grantha* did remain to this day the only complete translation of the Sikh scriptures.[31]

Besides the spreading of western thought and ideals through the study of the English language and the preaching of Christian missionaries, another force was at play in nineteenth century India, especially in Bengal: the religious revival known as 'the Indian Renaissance' or 'Neo-Hinduism', which encompassed several movements and was itself deeply influenced by Christian religious ideals and ethics. The aim of the reformers was to salvage Hinduism from the morass of superstition, polytheism and idol-worship, and to make it into a strongly monotheistic faith, spiritually and ethically acceptable to the new western-educated Hindū elite.

At first Sufi, and later Christian influences were at play in the reform initiated by Rām Mohan Roy, which gave birth to the *Brahmo-samāj*, an ecletic religious movement with deistic theology and Christian ethics. The most notable among Rām Mohan Roy's first collaborators was Prince Dvārakānāth Tagore, Rabīndranāth Tagore's great grandfather. At last Neo-Hindūism under various forms developed during the first quarter of the twentieth century, a period which saw the rise of the great poet Rabindranāth Tagore.[32]

Tagore himself largely drew his inspiration from the Vaiṣṇav lyrics in Bengali—especially the Baül songs—and also from the words of Kabīr, for whom he professed a deep admiration.[33] It was Tagore who suggested to his friends Kṣiti Mohan Sen to undertake a collection of poems attributed to Kabīr and sung by itinerant *sādhus* all over India (especially in Bengal) and their translation into Bengali. The work was published in Calcutta in 1910-11.[34] Tagore himself selected a hundred poems out of K.M. Sen's collection and translated them into beautiful English in 1914, under the title *One Hundred Poems of Kabīr*, with an Introduction of Miss Evelyn Underhill.[35]

"Unfortunately, the authenticity of those poems is very questionable: it does appear that most of them were probably not composed by Kabīr." (But this statement is not correct). And the Introduction written by Miss Underhill contains some baffling statements.[36] But the whole book clearly shows the considerable prestige Kabīr had acquired in the eyes of those westernized Bengali intellectuals: they tended to consider him not only as a great mystic, but also as the herald of the 'Universal Religion', a champion of the unity of mankind, and a bold social reformer. The exalatation of Kabīr by Hindū patriots—and generally by the Hindū intelligentsia of the twentieth century—dates from that period. Unfor-

tunately, Tagore's version of the Words of Kabīr remained for a long time the only available document accessible to the westernized public.[37] The question of authenticity was apparently never raised, either by Tagore himself or by his Indian and western admirers.

But it is painful western researchers are challenging the authenticity of Tagore's translation of Kabirian verses. It is a great challenge that should be accepted by the Indian scholars to expose the reality or truth of this charge.

The Kabīr-Granthāvalī and Vaudeville :

Vaudeville has highlighted the earlier Kabirian researches and studies and further writes : some ten years after Macauliffe's translation of the Sikh *Grantha*, a third important collection of Kabīr's verses came to light: this collection, known as *Kabīr-granthāvalī*, represented the tradition preserved by the *Dādū-panthī* sect of Rajasthan, whose founder, Dādū-Dayāl, was knwon as a close follower of Kabīr. That collection was published in 1928 at Benares by an Indian scholar, Shyām Sundar Dās, under the title *Kabīr-granthāvalī*, with a fairly long introduction in Hindī.[38]

The S.S. Das edition is based on two manuscripts preserved in the library of the *Nāgarī Prachāriṇī Sabhā* in Benares, one of them dated *Vi.ś.* 1561 (A.D. 1504), a very early date indeed, which was accepted by the editor. But the colophon which gives this date is written by a different hand from that of the manuscript and could not, therefore, be accepted as genuine, as shown by the great Indologist Jules Bloch in one of his Forlong Lectures, delivered in 1929. In the same lecture, Bloch deplored the lack of attention shown to the philological problems raised by medieval *Hindī* and New Indo-Āryan literatures and the extreme paucity of well-established texts.[39]

Even if the date ascribed to the Benares manuscript by S.S. Dās could not be accepted, the collection published under the name of *Kabīr-granthāvalī* was of great importance. It was, nevertheless, overlooked by British scholars of the time. In 1931, the last of the Christian missionaries to write on Kabīr, the Revd. F.E. Keay, in *Kabīr* and *His Followers*, gives a fairly exhaustive compendium of what was then known about Kabīr though apparently well informed of the *Kabīrpanthī* tradition and of other sources of Indian biography, Keay mentions only two compilations of Kabīr's verses, namely the *Bījaka* and the *Ādi Grantha*. Quoting from the partial

translations by Ahmed Shah and Macauliffe, Keay's surprising ignorance of the existence of the *Kabīr-granthāvalī* collection of Kabīr's verses exemplifies the kind of divorce existing between the old school of British scholars-cum-missionaries and the new 'native' scholarship.

In his long *Hindī* introduction to the first edition of the *Kabīr-granthāvalī*, S.S. Das attempts a critical appraisal of *Kabīr's* origins, personality and spiritual message. He accepts on the whole, though not without some reservations, the traditional account of Kabīr's life as already recorded by Wilson and others—an account mostly based on *Kabīrpanthī* sectarian literature. He takes sides, however, in the old controversy about Kabīr's social origin and adduces some curious arguments to demonstrate that Kabīr could not have been brought up in a Muslim family and that, even if he had, he could hardly have been influenced by his upbringing! Kabīr according to S.S. Dās, was so imbued "in his whole body" with "Hindu thought" that "there was a great probability that he was of *Brahmin* blood, at least of Hindū blood....".[40] According to the same author, Kabīr was at one and the same time a pious Vaiṣṇav and a staunch partisan of *advaita*, the monist interpretation of the *Upaniṣads*! Though non-sectarian in his approach, the evident anxiety displayed by S.S. Dās to 'Hinduize' Kabīr appears somewhat coloured by the rising Hindū patriotism of the time.

The first scholar to take into account the *Kabīr-granthāvalī* recension was Mohan Singh, an Indian Professor at the oriental College of Lahore and a well-known specialist of *Urdū* and *Panjabi* literatures. Mohan Singh's book on Kabīr, *Kabīr, His Biography*, published at Lahore in 1934 and dedicated to Dr. T. Graham Bailey, does not read to well in English and it is badly composed: yet, the book constitutes a mine of information, bringing out a mass of little-known facts mostly called from unpublished works.

In his earnest search for the 'historical Kabīr', Mohan Singh peevishly criticizes his predecessors in the field, his main targets being Keay and S.S. Das. Mohan Singh also sets about destroying the myth of Kabīr's eminent role as a 'reformer' or initiator of a new form of religion. Newly coined epithets flourish under his pen, such as 'mythographers' and even 'Kabīrolatry'. And it is not only the sectarian *Kabīrpanthīs* (who see in Kabīr an *avatāra* of the Supreme Being) who stand accused of 'Kabīrolatry', but

the whole new legion of Kabīr's fervent Hindū admirers—and some of their western counter-parts.

In spite of Mohan Singh's solitary protest, enthusiasm for Kabīr as 'a social reformer' and herald of a new religion, appears to have been rising among the Hindū intelligentsia in the thirties and forties, and this enthusiasm seems to have followed the curve of the powerful movement towards a political and cultural independence led by Mahatma Gandhi.[41] In the Introduction to his edition of Kabīr's verses as found in the *Gurū Grantha* (published under the title of *Sant-Kabīr*), Dr. R.K. Varma expresse his personal opinion as much as that of his contemporaries when he writes :

> Kabīr opens a new era... He introduces a critical judgment on the religious and social life of his time... He stands for the abolition of traditions and a new social awakening. He originates a new religion, *sant-mata.* This new religion is a simple living religion, open to all, it is a truly spiritual religion, a religion based on personal feelings...[42]

According to Dr. R.K. Varma, through Kabīr, human society as a whole discovered "the true nature of religion". Varma calls Kabīr "the saviour of Hinduism" and he presumes that it was solely owing to the great mystic's teaching and influence that the Hindūs of his time did not lose heart altogether and abandon *en masse* their own religion for Islam. "In the new awakening brought about by Kabīr", he says, "Hinduism found strength".

Similar statements, which often smack of communalism under the guise of Hindū patriotism, can be found in other works and articles published in *Hindī* during that period. They were mostly expressed by people who did not care to study Kabīr or his verses in an objective, critical way, but found it easy to enlist him as an ally in what was primarily a political struggle."

4. Neo-Hindūism and Kabīr

Vaudeville further critically observes that "The judgment on Kabīr found in the 'Publishers Note' prefaced to the 1953 Sushil Gupta's reprint of Westcott's well-known work on—*Kabīr and the Kabīr-panthīs* is characteristic of the way most modern, educated Hindūs look at Kabīr :

> Kabīr is the Indian Luther of the 15th century who may rightly

> be regarded as the creator of sacred literature in *Hindī*. He and his successors endeavoured to combine strict monotheism of Islam with its abhorrence of idolatry with whatever was best and most deeply rooted in the creed of Hindūism. Like Rāja Rām Mohan Roy, he attempted to form a composite creed out of the best elements of Hindūism and Islam. He based his teachings on the monotheism of the Upaniṣads. He was a great singer, an *avadhūta*, an advocate of *advaitavāda*, who placed the Law of the Universe in the heart of man as his higher self, where alone the soul can discover it...

An echo of Rabindranāth Tagore's judgments of Kabīr is noticeable in this passage, and the reference to Luther and Rām Mohan Roy is also characteristic. The neo-Hindū view of Kabīr somehow synthesizes the view of the Christian missionaries of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the re-appraisal brought about by the neo-Vedāntist movement and the political struggle for Indian independence. In a similar way, even a Muslim author like Yusuf Husain writes that "Kabīr was primarily prompted by a desire to bring about a synthesis between Islam and Hinduism" and that, in so doing, he indicated "the way leading to the establishment of national cult."[43]

Though all those efforts, in different ways, helped to give impetus to 'Kabīrian' research, they at the same time prevented such research from being carried out in an objective, dispassionate manner. The attempt to annex Kabīr in support of one's own religious convictions or social preferences was made all the easier as Kabīr's personality was clouded in mystery and the contents of his message remained uncertain. As we have seen, the first European scholars to write about Kabīr knew him only through the traditions of the *Kabīrpanthī* sect—and the authenticity of that tradition was not questioned for quite a long time. Even though Wilson and other scholars were well aware of the legendary character of Kabīr's biography current in their time, they had no means of checking the authenticity of Kabīr's sayings either as recorded in the *Bījaka* or in the *Gurū Grantha* or as quoted by the common people of Hindūstan. As a result, the interpretation of Kabīr's message remained for a long time a 'free for all' and to some extent it remains so, even today. No Indian mystic was so much quoted and misquoted, so lavishly praised—and misunderstood.

From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, popular editions of so-called Kabīr's verses prolifereted all over India, principally in Bengal, but also in Gujarat and Maharasthra.[44] The very abundance of those editions testify to Kabīr's growing prestige among the literate—and also to the extreme confusion prevailing as to what could be admitted as his authentic teachings. The interpretation of many verses attributed to Kabīr, found in the *Bījaka* or in other collections, raised many difficulties, due partly to the uncertainties of the text and partly to the strange, allusive, esoteric language in which many of his utterances—or sometimes imitations of his utterances—were couched. Kabīr's first translators: Rev. Prem Chand, Ahmed Shah and Trump, had rightly pointed out those difficulties, adding that commentaries, whenever they existed, as in the case of the *Bījaka*, were of little help. A valid interpretation of Kabīr's sayings also depended on some reliable information concerning the poet's orgin and milieu, his own religious and literary tradition—information which had to be painstakingly retrieved from a mass of legendary material, in the face of preconceived ideas and judgments which, as they mainly depended on sectarian affiliations, were offen mutually contradictory.

That Kabīr was born a low-caste weaver is undoubtable. Yet he is generally considered in India—at least by *Hindūs*—as a *Vaiṣṇav*, though 'a liberal one'.[45] More specifically, he is represented as the chief exponent of a particular form of *bhakti* (devotion) centered on the invisible, 'non-qualified' (*nirguṇa*) Deity, distinct from the 'qualified' (*saguṇa*) Deity, i.e. the incarnate and visible manifestations of the supreme Lord, *Bhagavān*. In India, so-called '*Vaiṣṇav bhkatas*' (devotees) worshipping *nirguṇa* supreme God and opposed to caste distinctions, or at least very liberal on matter of caste, are generally called 'Sants' (lit. 'saints') both in Northern India and in Mahārāṣtra. He belongs to the category of 'Sant', lit. 'a holy man', whatever his background. In Northern India, the promoter of the 'Sant' school is said to have been Rāmānanda, about whom little is known: he is said to have been Kabīr's own '*Guru*', since to be *nirguru* ('one wihout a *guru*') is disreputable in India. Nevertheless, Kabīr is considered the first and foremost of all *Sants*, the *Ādi-Sant*.

The Northern *Sant* tradition was critically studied by a group of modern Indian scholars, under the leadership of P.D. Barthwal, a pioneer in the field. In 1936, Barthwal published *The Nirguṇa*

School of Hindī Poetry, a study which showed remarkable insight.[46] A few days earlier, in a communication to the *Kāśī Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā*, a scholarly organization, Barthwal had brilliantly demonstrated the close link between the so-called '*Sants*' and the medieval *Tāntric* sect of the *Nāths*, also known as Kānphaṭā or *Gorakhanāthī Yogīs*. Barthwal had worthy successors in H.P. Dvivedī[47] and Paraśurāma Chaturvedi,[48] whose writings on the Nāth and Sant traditions constituted an important contribution to the religious and cultural history of medieval India.

Vaudeville says as far as most of the writers of that period were concerned however, and especially in the case of Kabīr, an important hurdle remained, as already noted by Jules Bloch: an imperfect knowledge of facts and documents, lack of indexes and dictionaries. Said Jules Bloch: "What is worse, the texts are intrinsically open to suspicion and editors generally take no heed of their duties in that matter".[49] The *Bījaka* itself, which was twice translated into English and abundantly commented upon in *Hindī*, was never critically edited. Of the *Kabīr granthāvalī,* the third great compilation of the words attributed to Kabīr, no translation or analysis, not even an entirely reliable *Hindī* conmmentary were so far available. A great need, therefore, was felt for a critical edition of Kabīr's words, based on a systematic study and comparison of all the main recensions and compilations of the verses attributed to him.

This difficult task was attempted in 1961 by a young scholar of the University of Allahabad, Shri P.N. Tiwārī, under the guidance of Dr. Mātā Prasāda Guptā. The title, *Kabīr granthāvalī* was justified in so far as the collection was based on the *Dādū-panthī* tradition, and had already been published under that title by S.S. Dās in 1928. Tiwārī's edition, therefore, was the first basis of our translations. Though, unfortunately, the author gives no concordances, a close scrutiny of the variants and the comparison of his amended text with the *Gurū Grantha* and the *Bījaka* texts so far available, made it possible to guess, at least with a fair amount of probability, the substance of Kabīr's teachings. Tiwārī's labours were not in vain: his *Hindī* translation encouraged further studies in textual criticism and medieval *Hindī* poetry. In his efforts to retrieve the old *sākhīs* or *śloks* spoken by Kabīr, he also brought out the extraordinarily attractive figure of the greatest Indian mystic who ever spoke and sang in the vulgar tongue, and whose utterances, in the

words of Farquhar, "have laid hold of the common heart of Hindūstan."

One can well understand how Charlotte Vaudeville took great pains in discovering Kabir—or researches made on him chronologically. She has actually tried to pressent how and in what manner research based studies started in colonical days and post independence era. Kabir has no doubt become a towering prophetic personality in India's social and literary history.

According to Dr. Pitambar Barthwal : In 1935, during his pilgrimage for the upliftment of the Dalits, Gandhiji surprised a considerable number of people present in *Kabīr* Maṭha in Kāśī by revealing that his mother was a *Kabīrpanthī*. However, for those who are fully conversant with the ideas, thoughts and principles of both Kabīr Sāheb and Mahātmā Gāndhī, there is nothing surprising as one is conscious of the close affinity between these two great souls.

Nevertheless, it would inevitably sound unconvincing for those who often associate Gandhi ji's ideas and views as being the result of strong influence of Russia, England and America. Of course he does not deny the impact of Tolstoy, Ruskin and probably of many others. But their influence become of secondary importance for the main stream of Gandhism undoubtedly finds it source in the basic teaching of Kabīr Sāheb, Gāndhijī's mother fed him with the milk of Kabīr Sāheb's philosophy, which in turn permeated his very veins. Hence, the impact of Tolstoy and others succeeded just in igniting the spark of Kabīr Sāheb's teachings already inherent in Gāndhīji though his mother's legacy.

The philosophy of Kabīr Sāheb tremendously helped Gāndhī jī in his search for Truth. Like Kabīr Sāheb, Gāndhijī wished to view the whole world through the spectacles of Truth. He considered truth to be the yardstick of all actions. He was always alive and alert to truth and he strictly conformed to it in all his endeavours even though he had to oppose the whole world. Kabīr Sāheb throughout his life time laid emphasis on truth and it is no secret that Gāndhijī's whole life was governed by truth.

References

1. J. N. Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 333.
2. *Medieval Mysticism of India*, London 1930, p. 87. This is the English version

of the *Adyar Mookerji Lectures*, delivered in Bengali, Calcutta University, 1929.

3. The *Kabīrpanthīs* are divided into several branches: the Surat-Gopāla branch whose centre is at *Kabīr Chaurā*, Benares, with a sub-branch at Magahar, sixteen miles from Goroakhpur, and the well-developed Dharmadās branch, establishd in Chattisgarh (Madhya Pradesh), which has its centre at Damakhera. According to Wilson, *RSH*, p. 53, the *Suart-Gopāla* (i.e. Kabīra Chaurā) branch had an establishment at Purī-Jagannātha in Orissa and another at Dvārka, which suggest a Kṛṣṇāite influence. Another important branch of the *Kabīrpantha* claims descent from Bhaggodāsa, *alias* Bhagavān Sāhib *alia* Bhaggojī, established at Dhanautī, in the Sāran district of Bihar; he is the purported compiler of the *Bījaka*.
4. Angelo de Gubernatis, *Gli scritti del Padre Marco della Tomba*, Florence, 1878, p. 94.
5. This work was found among the papers left by Padre Marcodella in the Borgia Collection of the Vatican; an abstract of the Italian translation was published by Angelo de Gubernatis in Vol. III of *Mines of the East*.
6. Angelo de Gubernatis, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
7. Referrings to Padre Marco's pioneer works on the subject, de Gubernatis concludes: "Blessed be his memory!"
8. J.B. Gilchrist, *A Grammar of the Hindostanee Language*, Calcutta, 1796.
9. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, London, p. 146.
10. The connection between Kabīr and Bengal is not clear. There is a Kabīr-maṭha at Purī in Orissa, where, acording to the local *Kabīrapanthī* tradition (mentioned by Keay, *KF*, pp. 107-8). Kabīra prevented the sea from submerging the Jagannātha temple. One of the two tombs of Kabīr mentioned by Abū'l Fazl is at Purī in Orissa. Actually, there are few *Kabīrpanthīs* in Bengal, but Kabīr's name is famous throughout the province and wandering ministrels sing a number of songs attributed to him. A number of early collections of Kabīr *bāṇīs* were published in Bengal.
11. W. Price, *Hindee and Hindoostanee Selections*, vol. 1, Calcutta, 1827.
12. *JA*, 9 (1832), 169.
13. "Ce *Śabda* ou verbe ressemble au *logos* de Palton: une etude de trente ans me fut necessaire pour les comprendre; et lorsque je montrai cette interpretation a feu mon ami le Dr. A. Nico [...] il eut de la peince á croire qu'elle vint d'une secte aussil illetree que sont les *Kabīra-panthīs* de l'Hindoustan".
14. Wilson, *RSH*, pp. 36-41. Wilson quoted Malcolm and Price. He does not appear to have consulted Harriott's paper, published a few months earlier.
15. Wilson even goes so far as to doubt Kabīr's existence altogether: "I think that it is not at all improbable that no such person as Kabīr ever existed and that his name is a mere cover to the innovations of some free thinkers among the Hindūs..." *RSH*, p. 36, n. 25.
16. Garcin de Tassy, *HLHH*, Paris, 1st ed., vol. I (1939), 274 ff.
17. *Ibid.*, 2nd ed. (1870), 120 ff.
18. W.W. Hunter, *Indian Empire*, London, 1882, p. 273.

19. The *Ādi Grantha* or *The holy scriptures of the Sikhs*, translated from the original *Gurumukhī* with Introductory Easays by Dr. Ernest Trumpp, London, 1877.
20. See below, Part 6: The Śloks of Shayak Farīd in the *Gurū Grantha*.
21. "After I had succeeded in engaging two Sikh Granthīs at Lahore, I was not a little surprised when they declared to me that the *Grantha* could not be translated in the literal grammatical way I desired. I soon convinced myself, that though they professed to understand the *Grantha*, they had no knowledge either of the old grammatical forms or of the obsolete words; they could only give me some traditional explanations, as I found them contradicted by other passages, and now and then they could give me no explanation whatever; they had not even a clear insight into the real doctrines of the *Grantha*. Other persons, who were recommended to me for their learning, I found equally ignorant...". (Trumpp, *op. cit.*, Preface, pp. v and vi). Trumpp's appraisal not only of Sikh learning of the time, but also of the compositions of the Sikh Gurus themselves, is bluntly depreciatory and contemptuous. The *Sikh Grantha*, according to him, "is incoherent and shallow in the extreme... It is for us, Occidentals, a most painful and almost stupefying task to read only a single *rāg*, and I doubt if any ordinary reader will have the patience to proceed to the second *rāg* after he shall have perused the first...". This is why Trumpp left the work incomplete.
22. Walji Bhai, *Kabīra Caritra*, Surat, 1881.
23. On Walji Bhai's views and Bishop Westcott's reactions, cf. Westocott, *KKP*, pp. 144-145.
24. *A Translation of Kabīra's Complete Bījaka into English*, by Prem Chand, Calcutta, 1911.
25. *JRAS*, 1907, p. 311.
26. Westcott, *KKP*, p. 90
27. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
28. Nicol Macnicol, *Indian Theism from the Vedic to the Mohammedan Period*, 1st ed., 1915, 2nd ed., Delhi, 1968, pp. 135 ff. Macnicol refers to Grierson's claim (*op. cit.*, p. 626) to find similarities between the Christian Eucharistic celebration and some of the *Kabīrpanthī* practices; but he is of the opinion that such similarities, though striking, are not conclusive, and the question of the *Kabīrpanthīs*' indebtedness to Christianity is a matter upon which we canot dogmatize."
29. According to a letter written by Bhāī Hazāra Singh Gyani, quoted by Macauliffe in *SR*, Preface, p. xiii; in the same letter, Hazāra Singh Gyānī congratulates the author on having "taken great care in keeping the rendering in accordance with the *sampardai arthas* (the traditional interpretations) of the *Sikh Gurus*".
30. "It is admitted that knowledge of the religion of the people of India is a desideratum for the British Officials who administer the affairs, and indirectly for the people who are governed by them so that mutual sympathy may be produced. It seems, at any rate, politic to place before the Sikh soldiery their Guru's prophecies in favour of the English and the texts of their sacred writings which foster their loyalty" (*SR*, Preface, p. xxii).
31. *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, translated by a group of Sikh scholars under the auspices of the National Academy of Letters, which first appeared in 1960, is only short anthology; it consists of selections from the *Ādi*

Gurū Grantha and the *Dasam Grantha*, with a few pages of Introduction by S. Rādhākṛṣṇana.

32. For these movements and the development of neo-Hinduism in the nineteenth century, see J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, 1st ed. Oxford, 1914; repre. Delhi, 1867. The period studied by Farquhar extends from 1803 to 1913.
33. There are various testimonies to Tagore's deep admiration for Kabīra, whose poetical utterances the great Begali writer considered as the highest achievements of all vernacular literatures. In *Saritā Patrikā* (Sept. 1959), a certain Bhagavāndin Jī recalls a conversation with Tagore on Kabīr, in which Tagore told him that what the Bengali language could not achieve in the expression of mysticism had been achieved in *Hindī* by Kabīr. (Quoted in *Sadgrantha Bījaka*, with a *Hindī* commentary by Abhilasdas, Gonda, 1969).
34. *Kabīr ke pad,* ed. K.M. Sen, *Hindī* text with a *Bengali* translation, 4 vols., Underhill, London, 1910-11.
35. *One Hundred Poems of Kabīr* translated by R. Tagore assisted by Evelyn Underhill, London, 1914.
36. Evelyn Underhill—and probably Tagore himself—both of them uninitiated in the old *Hindui* language, show a surprising ignorance of the tenets held by Kabīr; e.g. on p. xiv of her Introduction, Miss Underhill writes: "Again and again he (Kabīr) extols the life of home, the value and the reality of diurnal existence...". Nothing could be further from the truth.
37. It was widely read in the West and even retranslated into French by Madame Mirabaud-Thorens. *Cent poemes de Kabīr*, translated by Mme Mirabaud-Thorens, Paris, Gallimard. Tagore's English translation was also adapted into Russian: Rabindranath Tagore *Poems of Kabīr*, translated by B. Vasin, Moscow, n.d., *Collected Works of Tagore*, vol. VI.
38. *Kabīr-granthāvalī*, ed. Shyam Sundar Das, N.P.S. Kāśī, 1st ed. 1928; 5th ed. Vi. Ṣ. 2011, (AD 1964). The text printed is that of the first manuscript (*ka*). Some variants found in the second manuscript (*kha*) are given in the foot-notes. Our references are to the 5th edition. This edition, known as the '*Sabhā* edition' has been constantly reprinted since.
39. Jules Bloch, *Some Problems of Indo-Aryan Philology*, Forlong Lecture for 1929, publ. in *BSOS*, 5, pp. 719 ff. The date attributed by S.S. Das to the Vi. Ś. 1501 manuscript is criticized by Bloch in his third Lecture, pp. 747. For Bloch, Kabīr is an example of a very popular *Hindī* poet whose verses had never been critically edited; cf. also Barthwal. *NSHP*, pp. 276-277; H.P. Dvivedi, *Kabīr*, p. 20; Chaturvedi, *KSP*, pp. 76-77.
40. S.S. Das, *op. cit.*, Introd., p. 24. The fact is that most Indian scholars of that time consistently tried to convince themselves and others that Kabīr could not have been born in a Muslim family.
41. Mahātmā Gāndhī's deep respect for Kabīr is well known;' some of Kabīr's popular poems used to be sung regularly in his own *Aśram*. It is also known that, in 1935, when Gāndhī was at Benares, he paid a visit to the *Kabīr Caurā Maṭha*, where he saluted Kabīr's image. According to the testimony of the *Mahant* of the *maṭha*, Gāndhī refused the seat prepared from him in front of Kabīr's *samādhi* and humbly sat on the ground instead. Gāndhī also declared, to the surprise of those present, that his own mother was a *Kabīrpanthī*. Barthwal, who refers to this episode in *Gāndhī aur Kabīr*, asserts that, of all influences that may have played upon Gāndhī's

mind, the strongest and deepest was that of Kabīr. According to Barthwal, the 'Gaṅgā of *Gāndhītva'* (i.e. Gandhism) had its source in Kabīr's teachings, which he had absorbed with his mother's milk. Gāndhi, like Kabīr, was a dedicated seeker of Truth (*satya*) and had made his whole life an exercise in the practice of Truth.

42. R.K. Varma, *Santa Kabīr*, 4th. edn. 1957, pp. 29 ff.
43. Yusuf Husain on Kabīr.
44. The earliest printed text attributed to Kabīr is found in the first lithographed edition of Price's *Hindee and Hindoostanee Selections*. The oldest of the popular editions of *Kabīr* was a book described in the Supplementary Catalogue in the British Museum for 1893-1912, as a collection of 'Poems by Kabīr and other Vaiṣṇava Poets' in Gujarati script, edited by Śaṅkara Haribhāī in 1888. During that period, a number of editions or paraphrases of Kabīr's verses in various vernaculars appeared: not only in *Bengali* and *Gujarati*, but also in *Panjabi*, *Sindhi*, *Tamil* and *Telugu*. Today cheap editions of Kabīr's words can be found in all those languages; they are very common in Marāṭhī. The author herself found such 'bazaar' editions of poems attributed to Kabīr in a strange half-*Hindī*, half *Marāṭhī* jhargon, sold in the form of cheap booklets in the Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage city of Paṇḍharpur in Mahārāṣṭra.
45. K.M. Sen, in *Medieval Mysticism in India*, classifies Kabīr among the 'liberals' as oposed to the 'Orthodox Thinkers'; Farquhar, *ORLI*, pp. 330 ff., consideres him as a 'reformed Vaiṣṇava'; so does R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, Collected Works, iv, Poona, 1929, pp. 95 ff.
46. P.D. Barthwal, *Hindī kāvya me yoga-pravāha*, NSPS (Vi.Ś. 1987, (AD 1930), p. 385.
47. H.P. Dvivedi, *Nāth Sampradya*, Allahabad, 1950; *Hindī Sāhitya kā ādikāl*, 3rd ed., Patna, 1961; *Kabīra*, 6th ed., Bombay, 1964.
48. P. Chaturvedi, *Uttarī bhārat me sant-paramparā*, Allahabad, *Vi. Ś.* 2008, AD 1951 (UBSP); *Kabīra-sāhitya kī parakah*, Allahabad, 1961 (KSP). Actually, in the *Gurū Grantha* tradition, though Kabīr himself is not called '*a Vaiṣṇav*', Vaiṣṇavas as a whole are presented as 'holy men', opposite to the 'despicable' *Śāktas*; cf. *Gurū Grantha*, *ślokas* 16; 52; 88; 100; et *passim*.
49. Jules Bloch, *op. cit.*, 1828-9.

5

KABĪR : BIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

Islamization of Kabir was started by orthodox Hindus. Muslim authors also tried to prove him a convert. So also the western researchers confused the whole issue and quoted from unhistorical sources proving him a Muslim weaver. This is altogether an unholy trend. There is enough on Kabir in Hindi. No doubt Charlotte Vaudeville had taken great pains while studying and collecting sources and references on Kabīr biography in English. During colonial rule many Indian and Western Scholars who studied Kabīr and *Sant* tradition in detail, created much confusion regarding his parentage, caste, date and place of birth in the absence of historical facts. However on the basis of Kabīr's own poetry, contemporary saint-poets' verses, and some other literary evidences Kabīr's historiography was all factual but researchers made it totally confused.

The researchers often quote Ravidās who declared Kabīr as a Muslim in one of his poems, but it seems to be a spurious one or fake. Kabīr himself, in certain *padas*, has mentioned that he is a *Korī* or Hindu *Julaha*.

It is strange no Kabīr ācārya or head of *Kabīr Pantha Gaddi* ever tried to write an authentic biography of this great teacher though they possess valuable information and old manuscripts with them. They only worship him as a great teacher, prophet, and incarnation.

Innocent and humble *Kabīrpanthīs*, however, do not argue with these so called authors as they think Kabīr was above caste, colour and creed. For them he was but a great teacher, a ford maker, a reformer and a philosopher. They believe that instead of wasting time in knowing his caste, his origin and growth, his spiritualim and social message should be studied which is unique and marvellous even in this age of science and modernity. Being an age of social transformation, Kabīr is more relevant today, and

his (hymns) like a burning lamp in the darkness.

Western scholars like Linda Hess, David Lorenzen, Charlotte Vaudeville and few others have studied Kabīr in recent times in depth. But there is nothing new, or surprising though these are useful studies for English knowing world. While writing something on Kabīr one has to quote them for the authentic available reseach material in English. We definitely see Vaudeville's study somewhat more in depth, analytical and logical. She has rather quoted and referred to almost all the researches of Western and Indian writers as well as missionaries on Kabir.

As Vaudeville observes* : According to Westcott, one of the causes of the prevailing confusion about Kabīr's biography and dates, is the existence of several 'Kabīrs' in the Indian tradition.[1] The name itself is undisputable Muhammedan, meaning 'Great' in Arabic: 'Al Kabīr' is one of the ninety-nine titles applied to God in the Qur'ān. Yet the Hindī poet Kabīr cannot be confused with any other 'Kabīrs' quoted by Westcott, though Indian Muslims have sometimes referred to him respectfully as 'Kabīr Shāh'.[2] Others called him '*Bābājī* Kabīr, *bābā* being a familiar appellation given to a holy man, especially a *Sufī* or a Yogi.[3]

Hindūs often refer to our Kabīr as 'Kabīrdās'. The word *dās* (Skt *dāsa*), meaning 'slave' or 'servant' is commonly added to the names of pious *Hindū* devotees, from medieval times to the present day, with the meaning of 'servant of God': *dās* applies generally, though not exclusively, to *Vaiṣṇav Bhaktas*, who regard themselves a humble servants or 'slaves' of the supreme Lord, Viṣṇu-Hari[4]. According to the *Kabīr-panthī* tradition, Bhagavāndās, (alias Bhaggodās or Bhaggojī) and Dharamdās—names with a distinguished *Hindū* ring,—were Kabīr's main disciples. Yet it seems that Kabīr—and not Kabīrdās—was the real name of the poet.

But again Vaudeville is confused. What is the harm in calling him Kabirdas, like Ravidas.

Most modern accounts of Kabīr's life are based on two *Kabīr-panthī* works: the *Kabīr-kasauṭī* and the *Kabīrcaritra*,[5] both full of wonders and miracles: their lengendary character is evident. There are many legends about every saint of bhakt poet. References to Kabīr in older Hindī or Persian works, however, are not lacking. Among the Hindū sources the most important are the *Ādi Grantha*

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* Vaudeville, p. 39 : Kabir's Biography—Introduction (alongwith references)

(or *Gurū Grantha*) of the Sikhs and the *Bhaktamāl*, or Garland of Saints of Nābhājī.

The *Gurū Grantha*, compiled in the Panjab on the order of the fifth *Gurū* of the sect, Arjun Dev, was completed in 1604. The work brought together the compositions of the first four Sikh *Gurus* and those of the old *Bhagats* (*bhakta*) or 'saints', predecessors of Nānak, from the ancient *Sufī* Shaykh Farīd, to Rāmānand and Nāmdev. Among the Bhagats, Kabīr held the place of honour, the number of poems and couplets attributed to him being particulary large.[6] The tenth *Guru*, Gobind Singh, made a few additions to the work of *Guru* Arjun and proclaimed that there would be no more '*Gurus*'. At the end of the seventeenth century, he compiled the final version of the *Grantha,* henceforth known as *Śrī Gurū Grantha Sāhib* and regarded as the living voice of the 'Gurus' or Prophets of the Sikhs.[7]

Nānak himself, the founder and first *Guru* of the Sikhs, though he was sometimes wrongly considered as a disciple of Kabīr, never mentions him in the *Grantha.* Yet Kabīr is held in high esteem among the *Sikhs* and a meeting between Kabīr and Nānak is described in various *Janam-sākhīs,* or 'life-stories' of *Guru* Nānak. But the *janam-sākhīs* contain much legendary material and there is no reason to believe that Nānak ever met Kabīr.[8] A mention of Kabīr, however, is found in the writings of the third *Guru*, Amaradās (1479-1574), who was the Emperor Akbar's contemporary. Says Amaradās: "*Nāmā* (Namdev) was a calico-printer (*chībā*) and Kabīr a weaver (*jolāhā*), yet from the Perfect *Guru*, they obtained salvation.".[9]

Among the *Bhagats* whose poems are preserved in the *Grantha*, 'Ravidās' or 'Raidās' (fl. 1450?) is generally believed to have been Kabīr's contemporary, but he more probably belonged to the following generation. Raidās mentions Kabīr three times in the *Grantha* and his testimony is probably the most ancient of all:

(1) The lowly dost Thou exalt, my Govind (God),
and none dost Thou fear:
Nāmadev, Kabīr, Trilocan, Sadhanā, and Sain were saved...[10]

(2) In whose family on the occasion of *Id* and *Bakr Id*, the cow is butchered; in whose family *Shaykh*, *Shahīd* and *Pīr* are reverenced.
Whose father acted in this way, the son following him—he, Kabīr, became reverenced in the three worlds.[11]

(But a large number of Kabir followers believe it is a fake poem, not by Ravidas) Some try to prove that Kabīr was indeed born a low caste. In another *pada*, Ravidās mentions Kabīr, together with Nāmdev, in connection with the redeeming power of Hari's Name:

> (3) Through the Name of *Hari*, Kabīr became renowned
> And the accounts of his sins of many births were torn up.[12]
> But Kabir has not committed any sin. He was a holyman.
> He was humble and honest. Then why this blame?

In the *Grantha,* another of the old '*Bhagats*', 'Dhannā', a *Jāṭ* by birth, from Rājapūtānā, also mentions Kabīr together with Nāmadev, Raidās and Sain, among the 'low-born' saints:

> In Gobind, Gobind, Gobind was Nāmadev's heart absorbed : A calico-printer worth half a cowrie[13] became worth many thousands
> Giving up weaving and stretching thread, Kabīr devoted his love to God's feet:
> Though a poor weaver of low family, he obtained untold virtues...[14] As a radical social reformer Kabir fought against social evils.

In the *Bhaktamāl* of Nābhājī, a *Vaiṣṇava* poet who flourished c. 1600,[15] a whole stanza (*chappay*) is devoted to Kabīr. Though Nābhājī himself is sometimes described as a *Rāmānandī* (a follower of saint Rāmānanda) his work is non-sectarian in outlook and it constitutes a very valuable source of information. Nābhājī's statement about Kabīr is as follows:

> Kabīr refused to acknowledge caste distinctions or to recognize the authority of the six Hindū shcools of philosophy nor did he set any store by the four states of life (*āśramas*) prescribed for *Brāhmaṇas*. He held that religion (*dharma*) without devotion (*bhakti*) was no religion at all (*adharma*) and that asceticism, fasting and alms-giving had no value if not accompanied by adoration (*bhajana*). By means of *ramainīs, sabadas* and *sākhīs*, he imparted religious instruction to Hindūs and Turks alike. He showed no partiality to either but gave teaching beneficial to all. With determination he spoke and never tried to please the world. Kabīr-refused to acknowledge caste distinctions and the six systems of philosophy.[16]

This stanza of Nābhājī contains very remarkable—and apparently objective—statements. The author of the *Bhaktamāl* does not say whether Kabīr was (or was not) born a Muslim: he simply asserts that Kabīr had rejected the whole Brahmanical tradition, including the divison of society into castes, and that he judged both religion, Hinduism and Islam, with total impartiality. Nothing is said about Kabīr's life, but his extraordinary independence of character is stressed. Nor is anything said about Kabīr's *guru*. Yet, in another stanza of the *Bhaktamāl*,[17] the name of Kabīr occurs in the enumeration of the disciples attributed to Rāmānand. But the contents cannot be considered as 'historical', since those disciples attributed to Rāmānand are either unknown or belong to different times and cannot have been his contemporaries. The information about Rāmānand in the *Bhaktamāl* is particularily vague: Nābhājī simply states that Rāmānanda lived to a very old age and he enumerates his twelve disciples, the number twelve being apparently conventional.

Vaudeville further writes that a commentary in verse on the original (*mūla*) of the *Bhaktamāla* was composed by Priyādās in 1712, under the name of *Bhaktirasabodhinī*. In a long development, the commentary introduces the legendary biography of Kabīr.[18] The most remarkable episode concerns the way Kabīr, though a '*Turk*' (i.e. a *Muslim*), managed to become Rāmānand's disciple: warned by a heavenly voice, he lay on the steps of the *ghāṭa* where Rāmānand used to come down for his first dip in the Ganges before daybreak.[19] The saint stumbled over Kabīr's body in the dark and the sacred invocation: *Rāma, Rāma!* involuntarily escaped him: this was the sacred *mantra*, through which Kabīr received the so-called *nāmādīkṣā* from the *guru*.[20]

Besides this unconventional way of initiation, other miraculous events are narrated by Priyādās. One of the most notable incidents concerns the denunciation of Kabīr by the Kāśī Brahmins to the Muslim judge and administrator, the *Qāzī*. Kabīr was accused for fomenting sedition and imprisoned. He was later brought in chains before the *Sultān* Sikander Lodī himself, who happened to be visiting Kāśī at the time. In spite of the *Qāzī's* injuction, Kabīr refused to bow to the Sultan, as he would only bow to Rāma. He was, therefore, condemned to death. Three successive attempts were made to execute the sentence: he was first bound and thrown into the Ganges, then into a blazing fire, and finally in front of

furious elephant, to be trampled to death—but each time he had a miraculous escape. In the end, it was the *Sultan* who bowed to Kabīr. On another occasion it is said that some *Apsarās* (heavenly damsels of radiant beauty) vainly attempted to reduce him; he was then favoured by a vision of the Lord *Viṣṇu-hari* in His *Caturbhuja* (four-armed) form. Kabīr resolved to go to Magahar to die: he was then said to be 120 years old.

Priyādās narrative presents Kabīr as Muslim born, but converted to *Vaiṣṇav Bhakti* through the influence of Rāmānand. The famous story of the double funeral, however, appears only in late commentaries. The main shrine at Magahar is still in Muhammedan hands, and Kabīr is honoured there not as Vaiṣṇava but as a *pīr*. The Muhammedan Julāhās in charge of the Kabīr shrine strongly deny the legend of the flowers and assert that 'Kabīr Shah' was buried on the spot in accordance with Muslim custom.[21] It is said that Kabīr's cenotaph at Magahar was built by Nawāb Bijlī Khān in 1450, two years after the Sant's death, and that it was repaired by Nawāb Fidāī Khān who was garrisoned at Magahar with an imperial force, c. 1567. The smaller *Hindū* shrine now found at Magahar near the Muslim shrine was built much later: only Hindūs visit it.[22] Both monuments are described in detail by Keay.[23] As a matter of fact Kabir shrine is still a very ordinary one and neglected for six centuries. This author visited Magahar shrine in 1992 alongwith Kalika Prasad, IAS the then DM, Gorakhpur and found it in a poor state.

Up to the time of Priyādās, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the fact that Kabīr was born a Muhammedan was apparently never questioned. It is only in later commentaries, and in popular biographies composed by *Kabīrpanthīs*, that Kabīr himself is represented as the son of a Brahmin virgin widow: he was born without a human father, as a result of the blessing of saint Rāmānand on the child widow... Later the baby was exposed on a lake and was then picked by a Muslim Julāhā couple called Nīru and Nīmā who were the child Kabīr's foster parents.[24] Evidently the fact that Kabīr was a Julāhā by birth was too well established, both by tradition and by his own utterances, to be denied. Yet, according to a Hindū tradition, the child Kabīr "Had refused circumcision". The intricate legend woven around his miraculous birth origins were 'pure' according to Brahmincal views. This story clearly marks a further step towards the Hinduization of Kabīr in modern times.

In this case, as in the case of Kabīr's *dīkṣā*, saint Rāmānand appear as the 'historical' link between Kabīr and traditional Hinduism.

Another ancient *Hindū* source is often quoted in connection with Kabīr's life: the *Śri Kabīr Sāhibjī kī parcaī* written by Anantadās, as author generally considered to have lived during the later part of the sixteenth century.[25] According to Anantadās, Kabīr was a Julāhā of Kāśī who did become a disciple of Rāmānand. Having spent his childhood 'in error' (i.e. as a Muhammedan) he received spiritual enlightenment when he was twenty years old. He was persecuted by the emperor Sikander Lodī when the latter visited Kāśī. He reached *mukti* at the age of one hundred. The miracle of the flowers and Kabīr's double funeral are mentioned by Anantdās, a pious Vaisnav, writes Vaudeville."[26]

Vaiṣṇavite Hagiography

There have been some recent researches which indicate that Vaisnav and Vallabhaite influence was helpful in creating a liberal and harmonous atmosphere in the society. Bhakti or sant movement was spreading in a noble way. Vaisnavite hagiography is a strong proof in this regard.

(i) Anantadās's Paracais

According to a recent research. "It seems that before the followers of the great *sants* of the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries themselves began to record the legendary accounts of their lives, liberal Vaiṣṇavite hagiographers such as Anantadās and Ṇābhādās took the lead in narrating these tales. First non-Vaiṣṇavite reference to legends about great *sants* are to be found in the utterances of *sants* who were the first generation disciples of Dādū (1544-1603). But by the end of the sixteenth century, two Vaiṣṇavite hagiographers Anantadās and Ṇābhādās had already produced the biographical narratives of Kabīr, Raidās and some other low-caste *saints* of the early period. Of these two, Anantadās was exclusive concerned with the biographies of Kabīr, Nāmadev, Pipa, Dhannā and Raidās. The authorship of the *Parachai* of all these *sants* has been attributed to him. We have drawn frequently from the *Kabīr Parachai* and *Raidās Parachai* of Anantadās. Devid Lorenzen believes that Anantadās composed these *Parachais* towards the closing years of the sixteenth century while Shukdev Singh is convinced that *Raidās Parachai* was composed in the year 1588 A.D. (V.S. 1654).

According to Lorenzen, Anantadās was a Vaiṣṇavite of the Rāmānandī stock, though John Stratton Hawley is of the opinion that the 'historical position' of both Anantadās and Rāmānand is not clear. It is, however, clear that he was deeply sympathetic to the low-caste *sants* and his *Parachai* perhaps constitute the oldest collection of *sant*-legends."

Another *Nirañjani Panthī* recession of *Kabīr Parachai* contains thirteen sections and includes some of the most important episodes in the life of legendary Kabīr. These episodes are: Rāmānand's acceptance of Kabīr as his disciple, God bringing a bullock's load of food to his house, various encounter between him and the Brāhmaṇas, his attempts to rid himself of increasing popularity by taking up the company of a prostitute and the resultant encounter with the Brāhmaṇas and the local ruler, the continuing Brahmanical hostility and *Sultan* Sikandar Lodi coming to the rescue of the Bārahmaṇas and *qazis*, persecution of Kabīr by Sikandar Lodī in various ways, Kabīr's miraculous escapes and acceptance of his greatness by the Sultan, the failure of the *apsarā* to seduce Kabīr in the face of his unwavering devotion to God, and finally God giving his *darśana* to Kabīr. Similarly, the Raidās Parachai narrates various episodes in the life of Raidās: his previous life as a Brahman, his birth in the low-caste *chamār* family, Rāmānand making him his disciple, his refusal to accept the philosopher's stone from God (*harī*), his encounter with the Brāhmaṇas at the royal court becomieng a 'political event', his confrontation with the Brāhmaṇas over the right to worship the *Śāligrāma*, his initiation of Jhālī Rānī as his disciple leading to another confrontation with the Brāhmaṇas, his debate with Kabīr, his visit to Cittor and manifesting himself in many identical forms in the feast and finally his taking out the golden sacred thread from within and showing it to the Kashi king, Brāhmaṇas and others."

However it is not difficult to decipher the Vaiṣṇavite flavour in these legendary, episodes. During the course of the seventeenth century, this Vaiṣṇavite flavour of the hagiographic accounts of the lives of the *sants* became even more perceptible. However, most of these stories, espceially those dealing with confrontation between the defiant *santas* on the one hand and religious authorities (mainly Brāhmaṇas) and rulers on the other, had low-caste origin. As the popularity of great *sants* such as Kabīr and Raidās increased during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many legends about them

developed from below. Liberal-minded and sympathetic Vaiṣṇavite hagiographers like Anantadās (late sixteenth century) and Priyadās (early eighteenth century) only appropriated these stories and re-interpreted them in Vaiṣṇavite terms, the study says.

For wellover two centuries this literary vaisnavite work was very populer among the religious circles.

(ii) Bhaktamāl of Nābhādās, Bhaktirasabodhinī of Priyadās and Bhaktavijay of Mahīpati

Further, as mentioned earlier also, "Bhaktamāl literally means 'The Garland of (*Vaiṣṇava*) Devotees.' Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl is the first major narrative of *Paurāṇ* and historical *bhaktas* put together. It set the trend for subsequent works of this kind. According to David Lorenzen, Nābhādās, like Anantadas, was a *Ramanandī* and they were separated from each other by "one spiritual generation". Most of the scholars have placed the composition of Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl around 1600 A.D., though Lorenzen is inclind to believe that it could have been composed between 1600 A.D. and 1625 A.D. Nābhādās in all likelihood belonged to a low-caste and was clearly sympathetic to devotees, both mythological and historical, who had risen to fame despite their low caste background. This fact was hardly brought to light earlier.

In fact as stirctly speaking, Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl is not a biographical work. Nor does it tell us many stories about the lives of the devotees. To use Linda Hess's phrase, it rather gives us "thumb nail" sketches of the Paurāṇic and historical *bhaktas*. He does refer to occasional episodes in the lives of certain individual devotees but such references are brief and assume certain degree of knowledge of events on the part of the listners or readers. Nābhādās glorifies the devotees more in terms of their ideas, values and teachings than in terms of events in their lives. In contrast to the *Parachais* of *Anantadas*, there are no references to the happenings, actual or imagined, in the lives of Kabīr and Raidās. References to the Paurāṇic devotees are even shorter and more often than not only names are mentioned. The range of *bhaktas* mentioned by him is very wide but his narration is characterized by lack of thick description. His portrayal of Kabīr has been termed "very accurate near-contemporary" perception of Kabīr. However, for other images of Kabīr, especially those that revolved around his supernatural anti-Brahmanical deeds and that reveal how the

ordinary people fashioned a Kabīr rooted in their daily experiences, we have to depend not on Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl but on its subsequent expansion by other hagiographers, on Anantadas's *Parachai* and on *santic* (or saintly) hagiography,

However, Nābhādās's Bhaktmāl, soon became popular among the Vaiṣṇavites and inspired later generations of hagiographers to compose poetical narratives on the lives of the devotees. When another Vaiṣṇavite hagiographer, Priyadās wrote a 'commentary' on Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl in the beginning of the eighteenth century, he claimed that in the course of his remembering the name of Caitanya, Nābhādās himself appeared to him and commanded him to narrate the lives of the *Bhaktas* in greater details. Here one must note that while Nābhādās was a *Rāmānandī* (and hence a Rāmāite), Priyadās, as is clear from his above-mentioned claim, was a Kṛṣṇāite belonging to the Guaḍīya *Vaiṣṇava* sect of Vṛndāvana. Nabhadās's Bhaktamal overcame various sub-sectarian differences among the Vaiṣṇavites and became a pan-Vaiṣṇavite text *par excellence*. Perhaps only the more sectarian Vaiṣṇavas of the Vallabhite *Puṣṭi Mārga* sect seemd to have remained relatively uninfluenced by the popularity of Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl. Even the *santic* hariographic narratives, such a Raghodas's Bhaktamāl, came to be modelled on Nābhādās's work. Priyadās insists that however great a *bhakta* may be in terms of his all-round devotion, it is necessary for him to keep Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl in his heart in order to comprehend the real nature of devotion. Popularity of Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl, particularly among Vaiṣṇavites, during the later and late medieval periods is also indicated by the esteem in which the work was held by Mahīpatī, author of Marāthī hagiograhic text, *Bhaktavijaya*. Mahīpati, expressing his gratitude to Nabhadās for his information, writes that Nābhājī (i.e. Nābhādās) lived in the "country to the North" and was an incarnation of *Brahmadeva*. He "wrote a great book containing the stories of saints." He again writes that Nabhadās was "a chief jewel among Vaiṣṇavas" and that he wrote "very extraordinary history of the *bhaktas*" and after reading this book he wrote his own work in Marāṭhī. Referring to the greatness of various Paurāṇic and historical devotees, Carandās, a prominent eighteenth century *sant*, informs us that it is these *Bhaktas* whose devotion was narrated by Nābhādās.

Moreover as "it is believed Priyadās composed his *Bhaktirasabodhini* in A.D. 1712. This work has been treated as

a commentary on Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl but it is more appropriate to look upon it as an expanded version of the original work. It is a full-fledged hagiographic work written by a broad-minded *Vaiṣṇava* from Vṛndāvana. While excluding individual devotees who do not find mention in Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl or who may have attained fame during the course of the seventeenth century, Priyadās gives detailed narratives of various episodes in the lives of *Puarāṇika* (Puranic) and historical devotees who have been treated fleetingly by the original author. Some of the great religius figures of the sixteenth century—such as Guru Nānak, his spiritual successors and Dādū—have been excluded from Priyadās's expanded version perhaps because the original author, Nābhādās deliberately overlooked them. It cannot be argued that Nābhādās was unaware of Guru Nānak who had acquired greater fame by the end of the sixteenth century than many other sixteenth century devotees who have been mentioned in the Bhaktmāl. One is tempted to explain this notable exclusion in terms of the growing instinct religious identity of the Sikh movement which may have made it difficult even for such a catholic Vaiṣṇava as Nābhādās to look upon *Guru* Nānak and other *Sikh gurus* of the sixteenth century as Vaiṣṇavas. It may also be stressed here that most of the sixteenth century devotees mentioned in Nābhādās's Bhaktamāla and Priyadās's Bhaktirasabodhinī belonged to or were associated with, regions, which came under increasing Vaiṣṇavite influence during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There is not much evidence to suggest the presence of a strong Vaiṣṇavite movement in the Punjab and north-western part of the country during this period. It is perhaps a later thenght that Sikh militancy has prevented Priyadas to do so. It may not be far from truth to suggest that for most part of the later and late medieval periods, the region beyond Thāneshwar remained some kind of prohibited zone and terra incognita for the leading Vaiṣṇavite preachers like Vallabhācārya, though some of his followers did establiṣh a branch of *Puṣṭi Mārga* in some towns on the banks of river Indus. A leading authority on the Kṛṣṇaite sects of the *Braj* regions tells us that the Punjab and north-western India remained largely isolated from the Vaiṣṇavite centres of northern India during the later medieval period. So far as the omission of Dādū in Nabhadās's Bhaktamāl is concerned, it was impossible to appropriate the memory of living, or recently dead, non-Vaiṣṇavite figure while it was relatively easier to do

so in the case of temporally distant figures such as Kabīr and Raidās. Priyadas could not include Dādū in his *Bhaktirasabodhinī* as he was bound by the names provided to him by Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl but another Vaiṣṇavite hagiographer of the eighteenth century, Mahīpati does mention the name of 'Dādū Piñjari' as a devotee of "perfect delight". It is clear from the above mentioned castes of exclusion that Vaiṣṇavite ideological considerations did play a role in Nābhādāsa's scheme of things. Most of Priyadās's information on the low-caste *sants* seems to have come from Anantadās's *Parachai* or from stories that were already in circulation.

As we see the *Bhaktavijaya* of Mahīpati (1715-1790) contains large number of verses on the lives of the low caste *sants* of medievial India. There are also the detailed descriptions of the lives of Nāmadev and other *sants* of medieval Mahārāṣtra. Mahīpati was born in family of *Varkarai* pilgrims and subjects the lives of Kabīr and other *sants* to extreme Vaiṣṇavization. Raidās is mentioned as Rohidās. Mahipati's works clearly indicates that the stories about the lives of major medieval *sants* such as Kabīr and Raidās had spread beyond northern India into the Deccan during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Kabir became a legend in his life time because of his reformative, harmonious, liberal and social outlook."

(iii) The Vārtā Literature

This is also a popular source. In fact "the *Caurāsī Vaiṣṇavana Ki Vārtā* ('accounts of eighty-four Vaiṣṇavas') and *Do Sau Bāvana Vaiṣṇavan Kī Vārtā* ('accounts of two hundred and fifty two Vaiṣṇavas') are the two most important texts of the Vallabhaite sect. They along with other *Vārtās* were written in the prose of the *Braja* dialect. *The Caurāsī Vaiṣṇavana Kī Vārtā* contains stories of certain episodes in the lives of eighty-four ideal followers of Vallabhācārya (1479-1531). Similarly, the *Do Sau Bāvana Vaiṣṇavan Kī Vārtā* has as its subject certain episodes in the lives of two hundred and fifty two exemplary disciples of Viṭṭhalanāth (1515-1564), the second son and successor of Vallabhācārya.

In fact these *Vārtās* illustrate the desirable qualities of the followers of *Puṣṭi Mārga.* According to the *Puṣṭi Mārga* tradition, these Vārtās were composed in the form of oral ancedotes by Gokulanāth (1551-1647), the fourth son of Viṭṭhalanāth (and grandsom of Vallabhācārya). These anecdotes were recorded in *Braj* prose by Hariray (1591-1716), a disciple of Gokulanāth. At a later

date, perhaps during the late seventeenth century, Hariray gave final form to the *Vārtās* and added his own comentaries. The *Vārtās* should, therefore, regarded as the mid-or late seventeenth century hagiographic sources. According to Charlotte Vaudeville, these *vārtās* should be viewed "as some kind of *dharma-kathās* or *Dharma-gāthās*, such as are found in Buddhist and Jaina literature." These were perhaps written on lines of Jaina Puranic legends or Jataka tales.

While comparing with Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl and Priyadās's *Bhaktirasabodhinī*, the *Vārtās* appear to be more sectarian. They rigorously exclude those Vaiṣṇavites who were not the followers of *Puṣṭi mārga.* Not only the low-caste figures of the *sant* movement but also the Vaiṣṇavites belonging to other sects have been overlooked. Still the historical value of the *Vārtā* literature cannot be doubted. Apart from throwing light on the internal deminsions of the Vallabhaite sect, it offers vital information on the attitude of the Vallabhaites towards orthodox Brahmanical groups, on mutual rivalries among the Vaiṣṇavite sects, on the relationships between the Mughal political authorities and the Vaiṣṇavites and on the politicial perceptions of the Vaiṣṇavites. However, from the view point of this thesis, the value of the *Vārtās* lies primarily in supplying important material for studying the religious perceptions of women and lower castes,and the relationship between the Vaiṣṇava preachers and their lower caste and women disciples. Several episodes in two *Vārtā* collections are about women and Vaiṣṇavas belonging to various low castes such as *Kunbīs, Dhobīs, Mālīs* and even outcastes such as *Chuharas.* The *Vārtā* literature, therefore, is important for constructing the history of lower caste religiosity in later medieval India.

As believed the utterances of later *sants* such as Rajjab, Dariya Sahib (of Bihar), Jagjivan Saheb Garībadās, Caranadās, Paltu and Tulsī Sāhib (of Hathras) are important sources for constructing the history of non-Brahmanical religious, social and political perceptions in the later medieval period. The value of *sant vāṇīs* also lies in the fact that in the course of emphasizing the social and moral standpoint of the *sants*, they make frequent, through extremely brief, biogrphical references to the great *sants* of the early period. They mention of the achievements of the early *santas* and trace their ideological and spiritual lineages to the "*sants*" of the *Paurānic* mythology. These fleeting references to the episodes in the lives

of early *sants* in the *vāṇīs* of later *sants* make it clear that the 'invention' of the legends was not the work of Vaiṣṇavite hagiographers alone. It is quite possible that before Vaiṣṇava hagiographers began to appropriate the memory of the low caste *sants* such as Kabīra and represent them as pious Vaiṣṇavas, the stories about the greatness of the *sants* were already in circulation among the common people. On the whole however, we must view the relationship between the *sant* poets or hagiographers of the later period and Vaiṣṇavite admirers of Kabīr, Raidās, Nāmadev, etc. in terms of creative interaction and mutual appropriations. It is quite possible that some stories about the great historical *sants* had their origins in Vaiṣṇava hagiography and were later incorporated in the *sants* hagiography. Thus the influence of Nābhādās's *Bhaktamāl* on some of the *sant* hagiographic texts such as Raghodas's Bhaktamāl is clear, though a deeper study of the latter would reveal interesting dissimilarities. The importance of the *sant* poetry of the later period also lies in the fact that it constitutes an index of the popularity of the great *sants* among the common people. The recurrent mention in the *vāṇīs* of later *sants* of the collective glory and achievements of the early *sants* clearly shows that the individual *sants* had not yet become the objects of sectarian worship."

Vaudeville in her study traces biographical references and writes that : "The Muslim tradition had known Kabīr not only as a weaver, but also as a *muwāhhid*, i.e. a believer of the unity of God. The first testimony is found in the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* complied by Abu'l-Fazl-i-Allamī, the emperor Akbar's friend and chronciler, in 1598. Abu'l Fazl mentions Kabīr on two occasions. In the section dealing with the Koṇāraka temples in Orissa, the author of the Ā'in-i-Akbarī says of Jagannātha-Purī:

> Some affirm that the believer Kabīr reposes here and to this day many authentic traditions are related regarding his sayings and doings. He was revered by both Hindūs and Muhammadans for his catholicity of doctrine and the illumination of his mind, and when he died the Brāhmaṇas wanted to burn his body and the Muhammedans to bury it.[27]

In another passege, describing the famous places in the province of Oudh (Ayodhyā; in Eastern Uttar Pradesh), Abū'l Fazl mentions Kabīr again:

> So say that at Ratanpur is the tomb of Kabīr the Believer. The portals of spiritual discernment were partly open to him and he discarded the effete doctrines of the time. Numerous verses in the *Hindī* language are still extant of him, containing important theological truths.[28]

Though the author of the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* asserts that Kabīr was a *muwāḥḥid*, both statements are remarkably cautious and their wording suggests that at the end of the sixteenth century there were already conflicting opinions of Muslim circles about the substance of the doctrines taught by Kabīr: such doctrines may not have been completely acceptable to some staunch Muhammedans, and this is probably the reason why Abū'l-Fazl does not clearly state that Kabīr was a *musalmān*. On the other hand, the testimony of 'Abdul Haq Dihalwī, in his Persian work *Akhbār-al-Akhyār*,[29] composed some years later, shows that Kabīr's verses were already being read or quoted in *Sufi* circles in Delhi and Agra at the beginning of the sixteenth century. It also shows that questions were raised about his teaching and his true theological position—some divines not being sure whether Kabīr was to be reckoned as a *muslamān* or as a *kāfir*."

Kabir was discouraged by Muslim rulers and condemned by Mullas and Maulavis. He was similarly disliked by Pandits. But Kabir himself was having tremendous influence over the common people through his verses. (Chanchreek : Kabir)

Vaudeville writes : The testimony of the *Dabistān-i-Mazāhib* ascribed to Muḥsin Fānī of Kashmir and probably written in the mid-seventeenth century, testifies to the continuous prestige of Kabīr among Indian Muslims, especially among those who shared the liberal tendencies of Akbar and Abū'l Fazl. The unknown author of the *Dabistān* shows a mind inclined to religious syncretism and he is fairly well informed about Hindū beliefs. In the eighth section of the second book, dealing with 'the opinions and ceremonies of the worshippers of Viṣnu' (i.e. the Vaiṣnavas), it is said that the ascetics among them are called *Vairāgīs*—and Kabīr himself is represented as one: "Kabīr, a weaver by birth, celebrated among those Hindūs who profess their belief in the unity of God, was a '*Vairāgī*'..." (or Bairāgī). This is probably used for those who have abandoned the world or embraced sramanic culture."

The account of Kabīr's life given in the *Dabaistān*[30] is rather

confused and it reflects some late Hindū traditions and interpretations of Kabīr's sayings; at the same time, a rather absurd story is introduced to show Kabīr's extreme devotion towards 'the Faqīrs'. A Faqīr again is brought into interfere in the quarrel between Hindūs and Muslims over Kabīr's mortal remains and to remind both parties that "Kabīr was independent of both religions". The *Dabistān* also mentions the tomb of Kabīra at *Purī-Jagannātha*: "In Jagannath, at the place where they burn the dead, is the form and simulacre of a tomb which they call Kabīr's".[31]

It is interesting to note that, whereas in the seventeenth century, a Muslim author did not hesitate to call Kabīr 'a *Vaiṣṇav*' and 'a Bairāgī' (i.e. a Vaiṣṇava ascetic), the late Persian work *Khazinat-ul-Asāfiyā* (c. 1868) is probably the first treatise composed by an Indian Muslim to mention Kabīr as a '*Sufī*' and even as a disciple of a famous Shaykh, known as Shaykh Taqqī.[32] Since the *Khazinat* was composed in Panjab some sixty years after Malcolm published his *Sketch of the Sikhs*, in which he refers to Kabīr as a *Sufi*, it is possible that both did draw on the same tradition, then current among Panjabi Muslims."

(It is clear Muslim and foreign writers properly could not compare between a Vaisnav saint and a Sufi saint.)

"Kabīr-panthī sectarian literature, on which, as we have shown, writes Vaudeville, that most modern popular biographies of Kabīr are based, presents Kabīr as an *avatār* of the Supreme Being, 'Sat Puruṣa' : the latter is supposed to have successively taken birth in each one of the four *yugas*—and the Kabīr, or Sat-Kabīr—is the name he had assumed in the present *kali-yug*.[33]As a practice Kabir is called Satnam among Panthis."

"Besides Kabīr's legenday biographies, *Kabīrpanthī* literature includes a number of imaginary dialogues called *bodha*, (enlightenment),[34] *guṣṭī, guṣṭī, goṣṭī* (Skt *goṣṭhī*, or conversation), in which Kabīr is made either to answer a trusted disciple's questions or to argue victoriously with a famed saint or *Yogi*, such as *guru* Gorakhnātha, or even the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad himself. Such works as *Rāmānand-goṣṭ, Gorakha kī guṣṭi*,[35] *Muhammad-bodh*, are evidently meant to establish the superiority of the *Kabīr-panthī* tenets over the Jain faith.[36] Westcott's list of *Kabīrpanthī* works also includes a *Nānak guṣṭ*, but the existence of such a work is doubtful.[37] Yet Sikh literature includes Kabīr-Nānak dialogues, composed with a view to established Nānaka's superiority over

Kabīr." (But such material lack historicity and authencity as well as perhaps imaginary)

Kabīr Dates

Vaudeville further mentions that Kabīr's dates are uncertain and have been the subject of endless controversy. Wilson quotes a *Kabīrpanthi* source according to which Kabīr was born in Vi. Ś. 1205 (AD 1149) and died in Vi. Ś. 1505 (AD 1449)—so that he would have lived 300 years![38] But it is all misleading and absurd. In *Kabīrpanthī* literature and Hindū tradition in general, the date of Kabīr's birth is given as 1398 and that of his death as 1518.[39] It is said that the first date would make it possible for Kabīr actually to have been Rāmānand's disciple, since the latest date assigned to Rāmānand's death is 1410.[40] Kabīr, therefore, would have been twelve years old when he met Rāmānand, who was then 111 years old! This *tour de force* is credited to the boy Kabīr's 'exceptional precocity'.[41] On the other hand, since the Sikhs generally believe that their founder, Nānak, who was born in 1469, did meet Kabīr, Westcott delays Kabīr's purported birth till 1440, so that he would have been only twenty-nine when Nānak was born.[42] Macauliffe and Carpenter, however, quote some 'native works' which place Kabīr's death as early as 1448.[43] Bhandarkar provisionally accepts the Hindūs traditional dates, whereas Farquhar proposes to bring down Rāmānand's dates to 1400-70 and Kabīr's to 1440-1518.[44] He is supported by Keay, who accepts these dates, since, according to him, they fit in with the dates of Rāmānand, Sikander Lodī and Nānak—all of whom Kabīr is supposed to have met. Keay believes that King Sikander, who reigned from 1488 to 1512, did visit the town of Jaunpur, and possibly Kāśī in 1495.[45]"

"The whole controversy over Kabīr's dates appears to be linked with the saint's Hindū biographers' conviction that Kabīr was Rāmānand's actual disciple and also that he was persecuted by Sikander Lodī in person. Some authors, influenced by *sikh* popular beliefs, also wanted to make Kabīr a contemporary of Guru Nānak—but, as we have seen, such an encounter was highly improbable, and the first two are very doubtful. Western scholars have been inclined to doubt the fact that Kabīr was actually Rāmānanda's disciple, but they have genrally accpeted his being a contemporary of King Sikander Lodī: of the two traditional dates, that of Kabīra's birth (1398) and that of his death (1518), they tended to deny the

first and to admit the second. Yet there is no histrical evidence—not even any probability—that Kabīr was Sikander Lodī's contemporary, as shown by Mohan Singh, Barthwal and Paraṣurām Chaturvedi.[46]

It has been argued that the pushing back of the date of Kabīr's birth to 1398 was motivated by a desire to uphold the belief concerning the relationship of Kabīr to Rāmānand: but it might just as well be argued that the date of Kabīr's death was pushed forward to 1518 to make it possible for him to have been persecuted by Sikander Lodī. According to another tradition, Kabīr would have lived in the sixteenth century.[47]

The various arguments brought forward by the debaters concerning the date of Kabīr's death were reviewed in detail by Chaturvedi in an Appendix to his work on the tradition of the Northern *Sant* or *Nirguṇī* poets. The author concludes that the available material simply does not allow one to draw definite conclusions about Kabīr's dates; there is a probability that Kabīr was born in 1398 and died in 1448. We can provisionally accept the first half of the fifteenth century A.D. as Kabīr's *flourit.* If this is the case, Kabīr would not have lived during the reign of Sikander Lodī, but under the Sayyed dynasty at Delhi and the independent Sharqi dynasty at Jaunpur. Jaunpur was the capital of the 'Eastern' Muslim kingdom which includes the ancient city of Kāśī, also known as Vārāṇasī, the modern Benares. And very near to Rae Bareli, Sultanpur, Lucknow and even Allahabad of modern times. In fact, Kabir researchers in order to show their wisdom and knowledge rather create confusions. They do not agree with each other. So did western writers.

Autobiographical Verses

Vaudeville here takes up Kabir's autobiographic verses as proof of his birth place. "Traditional accounts of Kabīr's life refer to a number of verses which are intepreted as autobiographical, but such accounts are not always reliable. While reading the popular accounts of Kabīr's life, one often gets the impression that such-and-such anecdote had been clumsily concocted to explain the peculiar circumstances in which the saint uttered such-and-such verse. Conversely, some sayings appear to have been attributed to Kabīr in order to justify a common belief about him. Such is the case with the often quoted line: "I was born in Kāśī and

Rāmānanda instructed me"[48]—an utterance which is not found in any of the main traditions and for which manuscript evidence does not exist. Actually, Rāmānand himself is mentioned only one in the three compilations—in the *Bījaka*—and in this particular line Kabīr does not say that Rāmānand was his *guru*, but he refers to him as a saint 'who drank deep of Rāma's Liquor'.[49]

However, Kabīr frequently refers to himself as a simple Julāhā, i.e. a Muslim weaver, of Kāśī. Nothing is said about the place of his birth: he may have been in Kāśī, or, as Barthwal believes, at Magahar near Kāśī, a particularly wretched place; various opinions have been expressed on this matter. In the *Gurū Grantha* compilation of Kabīr sayings, we find a number of so-called 'autobiographical *padas*' which both in tenor and style have a look of authenticity'. One such verse concerns Kabīr's experience in Magahar :

> Confiding in thee, I dwelt in Magahar and the tormenting fire of my body was quenched:
> First I had a vision of thee in Magahar and then I went to dwell in Kāśī."[50]

Further as Vaudeville writes : The question of Kabīr's birth place has also been much discussed. Barthwal believes that more probably Kabīr was born at Magahar 'which is pre-eminently a place of weavers'. The *Kabīra-panthīs* of Benares believe that he was born at Lahartārā, only two miles from the famous *Kabīr Chaurā maṭha*. According to H.R. Nevill[51] Kabīr was born in Belharā in the Azamgarh district. Subhadra Jha,[52] relying on one line in the *Bījaka* (*śabda* 103), tried to establish that Kabīr was born in Mithilā... P.N. Tiwārī[53] suggests that Kabīr may have been born at Candvāra, in the Ballia district of Eastern Utter Pradesh, basing his opinion on several little-known *Kabīrpanthī* works, all of which mention Candvāra: the search for Kabīr's birth-place had become a 'querelle de clocher'.[54]

Born in Magahar or not, the poet exalts the 'Vision' of the supreme reality which is not tied to any place. So the poet says in the following line:

> Just as Magahar, so is Kāśī (to me): I have known both as the same,[55]

meaning that 'Holy' Kāśī is no better than 'impure' Magahar. The

intention of the poet is clearly to demonstrate that Hindū prejudice about 'holy places' is mere phantasy, since the attainment of spiritual experiences does not depend on the reputed sanctity of any given spot.

That Supreme Reality, which can be contemplated 'within', Kabīr mostly calls 'Rāma'—which is a Hindū name for God. From a Muslim point of view, this must have been felt as an unwelcome innovation. That Kabīr's 'Julāhā' family may have resented it, is implied in the words put into the mouth of his mother in the *Grantha*:

> Who, in our family has ever invoked 'Rāma'?[56]

An often-quoted *pada* found in the *Grantha* tells of Kabīr's mother's sorrow because her son had given up his ancestral trade, weaving, to devote himself to the cult of 'Rāma'. Another complaint of the same type is put in the mouth of Kabīr's wife. Such verses seem to corroborate the testimony of Saint Dhannā, according to which Kabīr, when he took up 'the name of Rāma', gave up his weaving.

One should not, however, infer from such isolated quotations that when Kabīr took 'to the name of Rāma', he renounced his ancestral trade once and for all and became some kind of wandering ascetic. In spite of what the *Dabistān* says, Kabīr certainly did not take ascetic vows, nor did he become a *bairāgī* or 'renouncer'. Kabīr's often-expressed contempt for faimly ties and family 'honour' is only equated by his disdain and aversion for 'professional' ascetics: *Yogīs*, *sādhus*, *sanyasīs* and the like whom he constantly ridicules. The general tenor of his verses makes it certain that he himself never donned ascetic *garb*, nor did he put on *tilak* and *mālā* or any of the various paraphernalia used by any particular sect, as he held all such 'disguises' in utter contempt.

References to Kabīr's family are scanty, except for the *pada* quoted above, which mentions his mother. In one line found in the *Grantha*, Kabīr refers to his father calling him 'a great gosain' (*gosvāmī*); the term 'Gosain', often applied to a Hindū saintly man, can be variously interpreted and the reference is isolated. In an often-quoted couplet from the *Grantha*, (sal. 115) Kabīr expresses disappointment and disgust at his own son, Kamāla's, behaviour:

> Kabīr's lineage was lost (lit. 'drowned') when his son Kamāl was born:
> He forgets to invoke *Hari* while he brings wealth into the house...

a verse which seems to indicate that Kamāla (or Kamal?) preferred practicing his trade and bringing home his earnings rather than following in his father's steps.

Kabir preached as a Hindu saint and voiced against social evils. As Sadguru he advocated communal harmony and discarded caste barriers. He lived as a simple artisan as a weaver reciting God's name as a true house holder. According to Vaudeville : "In spite of the view held by a number of *Kabīrpanthīs*, there is hardly a doubt that Kabīr was married. The Sikh tradition calls his wife 'Loī' and attributes two sons to him: 'Kamāl' and 'Nihāl', and also two daughters, 'Kamālī, and 'Nihālī. It is probable that Kabīra had several children, as suggested in the *Grantha*, but, apart from the couplet quoted above, nothing is known about it. All that can be said with certainty is that Kabīr's view of family life and family relationship was pessimistic in the extreme. Yet, somehow, the memory of Kamāla, Kabīr's son, lingers: at Magahar, at the back of the Muslim shrine built over Kabīr's tomb, a smaller shrine is found, which is said to be the tomb of Kamāla.

In a poem found only in the *Grantha,* Kabīr's mother curses some 'shaven ascetics's who have changed her little daughter-in-law's name from Dhanīā' to 'Rāma Janīā':

> My little daugher-in-law's name is 'Dhanīā'
> But they have called her 'Rām Janīā' -
> Those shaven ascetics have darkened my house:
> They have attached my son to Rāma-Ramaüā! (*āsā* 33, v.1)

There is a pun on Dhanīā, which means either 'wealth' or 'wife'. The *mumḍīa,* literally the 'shaven ones', most probably refer to the Vaiṣṇava ascetics known as *Bairāgīs.*[57] Ghurye[58] says that the Bairāgīs are not cleanshaven; actually, today, most of them keep their hair long and some keep it matted like the sanyāsis.

Like all Indian saints, Kabīra is supposed to have travelled far and wide, not only in Northern India and the Decan as far as Paṇḍharpur, but even abroad to Mecca and other far-away places.[59] There are, in fact, a number of allusions to the Mecca and the Kaaba pilgrimage in Kabīr's verses—but the allusions are either disparaging or ironical:

> *Kabīr,* I was on my way to the Kaaba
> when God came in front of me,

> But the Lord frowned on me saying:
> "Who ordered you to go there?"[60]

Kabir has confrontation with the Sultan Sikander Lodī, in which he emerges victorious. According to the first, Kabīr was bound with chains and thrown into the Ganges[61]—but he had a miraculous escape when the 'Holy Gaṅgā' brought him up again "seated on a deer's skin"; according to the second,[62] Kabīr was condemned by the Qāzī to be trampled down by a furious elephant—but the holy beast would not oblige.[63]

Some of Kabīr's most famous utterances concern Magahar, near Gorakhapur, the place where he departed from this world and where, according to Muslim tradition, he was buried.[64] Magahar is an ancient site, reputed to have been the seat of the Buddhist hierarchs for some time after the city of Kapilavastu was destroyed. According to local traditions, the first inhabitants of Magahar were a non-Āryan tribe belonging to the inferior Dom race, called Domkatars. Nowadays, Magahar has a large Muslim population, the main group being precisely that of the Kabirpanthis and Julāhās, who in that area are either cultivators or weavers, like Kabīr. The Hindūs of Kāśī held Magahar in contept; moreover, according to popular belief, whilst those who die in holy Kāśī reach salvation through Lord Śiva's grace, those who die in Magahar are reborn as asses! Magahar's ill repute, in opposition to Kāśī, a stronghold of orthodox Brāhmaṇism is easily explained, as noted by Mohan Singh, by "the prominent association of the place with Buddhism, with low-caste Śūdras, and also with *Musalmāns*, among whom first came Julāhās".[65] As yet no research has been carried out that followers of Kabir were earlier followers of Buddhism, the Kori (Koliyas). (Chanchreek). In the *Grantha* Kabīr says:

> My whole life I have wasted in Kāśī
> But, at the time of death, I have risen and come to Magahar.
> For many years I had practised austerities at *Kāśī*,
> But, in death, I have made my dwelling in Magahar.
> For him who thinks, Kāśī and Magahar are one:
> With such scanty devotion, how could man be saved?[66]

Those famous lines were variously interpreted, especially the line

maranu bhaïa maghara kī bāsī, which Trumpp translates: 'Death has come to me, dwelling in Magahar'[67] and Maculiffe: But now that death is at hand, I have come to dwell in Magahar.[68] Those verse have been quoted as proof that Kabīr did in fact die at Magahar: he would have pronounced these words at the point of death. More probably, if Kabīr did not spend his last years in Magahar, he at least foresaw the possibility of his dying and being buried there—what he ironically describes as 'Making his dwelling in Magahar'. But the general meaning of this *pada* (and of the similar *pa* found in the *Bījaka*) is clear: Kabīr ridicules the Hindū supersititous fear of Magahar while proclaiming his staunch faith in Rāma, who is the same everywhere and who alone can save. This poem is not a statement of fact about Kabīr's actual moving to Magahar at the time of his imminent death, but a proud challenge especially directed at the bigoted Brahmins of 'Holy Kāśī':

> He who dies in Magahar becomes an ass-
> so, have you lost all faith in Rāma?
> Dying in Magahar, you will not know death,
> dying elsewhere, you'll put Rāma to shame!
> What is Kāśī? What is the barren land of Magahar,
> If Rāma dwells in my heart?
> If Kaḅīr dies at Kāśī,
> what homage will he render Rāma?[69]

Kabir lived as an outcast in Kasi and much tortured by the Brahmins. Same Brahmins create confusion about his date and place of birth and even caste. Same class of teachers and university professors now appreciate him as a revolutionary for promotions and own publicity, authorship as well.

According to Vaudeville : The legendary life of Kabīr follows well-known patterns of Indian hagiography. A saint's prediction and blessing—which cannot be-gain said—account for his parthogenous birth: he is found exposed on a lake, which is reminiscent of Vaiṣṇuite legends.[70] Kabīr's denunciation by the Brahmins to the Muslim authorities as a fomenter of sedition finds a parallel in the story of the famous Bengali saint Caitanya, whom the Brahmins of Nadia, exasperated by his *kīrtana-yātrā*, denounced to the Muhammedan governor. But whereas, according to the *Gauḍīya* tradition, the Muhammedan governor of Nadia, over-

whelmed by Caitanya's fervour, ended in joining the *saṅkīrtan* himself,[71] Kabīr is said to have been confronted by the formidable Sultān of Delhi, to whom he proudly refused to bow.

This noble and defiant attitude attributed to Kabīr seems in accordance with the proverbial strength of his character—besides, such an attitude conforms with what is expected of a great Hindū saint, as shown by the legend of Śūdras contemptuously refusing Akbar's favours:[72] an attitude which seems to have been precisely opposed to the actual practice of the Vaiṣṇav sectarians—especially the Vallabhaites—who did thrive under the Mughal emperors' protection and benefited from their gifts. Yet, from the seventeenth century onwards, Vaiṣṇav hagiography takes on a strongly anti-Muslim flavour, which is usually explained by Aurangzeb's fierce persecution of Hinduism.

Here, the legendary account is not based on well-defined patterns of Indian hagiogrpahy—it is rather the expression of genuine puzzlement and wonder on the part of the Indian masses: the question-mark placed by posterity after Kabīr's illustrious name.[73]

Vaudeville tracing Kabir and his times observes that the breaking up of the Delhi Sultanate which began in the reign of Muhammad Tughlaq, ended in the tragedy of Taimur's invasion and in the sack of Delhi in 1398. The end of the Delhi Sultanate ushered in a period of turmoil and confusion which saw the rise of the Sayyid and later of the Lodī dynasties at Delhi. But the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate was concomitant with the rise of independent Muslim kingdom, especially in the east—that is in Oudh, Bihar and Bengal, and in a part of the Deccan.

The Eastern and Southern Muslim kingdoms of the fourteenth and fifteenth century played a great part both in the diffusion of Islam and in the elaboration of a new *Hindū Muslim* culture. Among the Eastern kingdoms, that of Jaunpur, in the central Gangetic plain (then including Oudh and Eastern Uttar Pradesh) was independent from Delhi under the Sharqī ('Eastern') dynasty from 1393 to 1479, when Husain Shah, the last Sharqī monarch, was defeated by Bahlol Lodī. The kingdom of Jaunpur included Kanauj on the west, Ayodhya on the north and Kāṣī (Benares) on the east, south of the city of Jaunpur, built on the Gomti river. After Taimur's invasion of Delhi, Jaunpur became the main centre of Muslim culture in Northern India, so that it was sometimes called 'the Shiraz of India'.[74]

In *The People of India*, a work based on the 1901 census,

Risley distinguished three main groups among Indian Muslims: '*Sayyeds*', '*Paṭhāns*' and '*Julāhās*'. While the two first groups claims a foreign, noble origin, the third, by far the most numerous, it purely autochthonous. The Julāhās ('weavers' in Persian) are estimated by Risley as about three millions in number and are widespread from Rajpūtānā to East Bengal and from the Kashmir frontier to Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. They are specially numerous in the districts of Basti, Gorakhpur, Benares and Jodhpur, in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. They are either weavers (*korīs*) or cultivators and rank low in social estimation: they evidently represent one of the large *Śūdra* castes which passed *en masse* to *Islam* some time between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries.[75]

Further according to Vaudeville there are many castes of weavers in India: with some local variations, their social status in very low; they appear affiliated with definitely non-Aryan groups such as 'Doms, 'Kols' and '*Draviḍas*'. The Indian word corresponding to the Persian *Julāhā* is Korī, 'as *Hindū Jaulāhā*'. In Uttar Pradesh there are no Hindū Julāhā' but Kabīra not infrequently calls himself a *Korī*, especially when referring to his trade.[76] So it appears that, even after embracing *Islam*, the Julāhās were still referred to as *Korīs*. The *Dhuniās*, cottoncarders, a caste closely related to the *Julāhās*, also passed to Islam without changing their caste name.

As in often the caste in India, the changing of *dharma* or 'religion' leaves pratically intact one's 'caste' (*jāti*, lit. 'birth') and it hardly raises one's status in the social hierarchy. Islamized or not, the Julāhās of Uttar Pradesh and the '*Jugīs*', the weaving castes of Bengal, retain their low status in Indian society, though their occupation does not make them into 'poluting' castes. The *Julāhās*, nevertheless, are the proverbial fools of many Indian stories, so that the word itself has come to mean 'a blockhead'.[77] This is alluded to by Kabīra himself, in a *dohā* found in the *Grantha* about his own *jāti*:

> Kabīra, that caste of mine
> is a joke to every one:
> Blessed indeed be such a birth,
> that let me invoke the Creator!

It is significant that mass conversions to *Islam* in Northern India took place in a few artisan castes, such as the *Korīs* and allied groups which, though low in the *Hindū* social hierarchy, did not

belong to the menial and so-called 'polluting' castes, such as the 'Chamārs', the 'Dheḍhs' and the 'Bhaṅgīs'.[78] Ravidās, who was a Chamār, clearly distinguishes himself—an outcast—from Kabīr, a weaver. Even there are Chamar-Julahas. Further to quote Ravidas' to prove Kabir a Muslim Saint is a highly misleading conspiracy of vested interests. Whereas the outcasts remained, at least nominally, Hindūs, the low artisan castes tended to become Muslims, which probably indicates a greater measure of independence on their part: they were poor and despised without being menials and serfs bound to the upper castes. It is also likely that the low artisan castes had already been influenced by the unorthodox Buddhist and Jaina *dharma*, a background which had fostered in them a spirit of rebellion against Brahmanical haughtiness and the rigidity of the Hindū social system.

It appears that Kori-Koli weavers and allied castes had early adhered to the Buddhist creed in large numbers, especially in North-Eastern India. Though Jainism attracted more converts in Western India and in the Deccan, its deepest influence was on the *Vaiśyas*, essentially merchant castes. In Eastern India, Buddhism remained alive till a comparatively late date," writers Vaudeville.

So everything seems confused in arriving at any decision. However Vaudeville has pointed out the weak point in the reseaches on Kabir.

From Buddha to Ashoka and Ashoka to Kabir there are references in the history of Shakya-Maurya and Koliya (Kori Caste), and as a matter of fact they were all inter related.[79] Buddha, Ashoka and Kabir were of the same stock.

References

1. Westcott, *KKP*, pp. 15-17.
2. H.R. Nevill, in the *Basti Dictrict Gazetteer*, Allahabd, 1907, p. 225, says that Magahar contains the shrine 'of the prophet Kabīr Shah'.
3. *bābā* means 'father, grandfather, old man'; it also refers to a *faqīr*.
4. The Vaiṣṇav devotees of Karnatak are known as *Haridāsas;* yet, in Karnatak some *Viraśaiva* or *Lingāyat* names also end in *dāsa*: Mohan Singh, *KB*, p. 29, remarks that the names of the Aughar section of *Gorakhnāthī Jogīs* also end in *dāsa*.
5. *Kabīra-kasauṭī*, or 'the Touchstone of Kabīr', and *Kabīr-caritra* or *Kabīr-kā jīvan-caritra*, are the most often quoted of the *Kabīr-panthī* narratives on Kabīr's life and the main basis of popular biographies of the saint. Keay remarks that the *Kabīr-caritra* seems togather most of its material from

the *Kabīr-i-Manshūr*, originally written in Urdū by Paramānand-dāsa of Ferozepur (Panjab) in 1887, of which a *Hindī* edition is also in existence. Both *Kabīr-caritra* and *Kabīr-kasautī* quote from a biography in verse composed by Sant *Garībadās* (1777-82). The Garībadāsīs are one of the numerous sect found in Northern India owing their inspiration to Kabīr.

6. No less than 225 *padas* and 243 *slokas* (*śloks*), (elsewhere called *sākhīs*) are attributd to Kabīr. The *Grantha* also attributes to Kabīr some compositions called *Bāvan akharī*, *Tithi* and *Vāra*. Similar compositions based on months and days were also made in the Panjabi language by Indian *Sufis*; cf. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967, p. 325.
7. The text of the *Grantha* has remained fixed since and it had been reprinted many times in Amritsar, both in the original *gurmukhī* and in the *Nāgarī* character. Our references are to the *nāgarī* edition, repr. 1951. As to Macauliffe's translations, our references are to The *Sikha Religion*, repr. New Delhi, 1963.
8. According to W.H. McLeod (*Guru Nānaka and the Sikha Religion*, Oxford, 1968, pp. 85-6) "*Kabīrpanthī* traditions concerning the life of Kabīr are notoriosuly unreliable and can be accepted only when confirmed by other evidence (...) There is no authentic tradition (in Sikh writings) concerning a meeting between Guru Nānak and Kabīr".
9. *nāmā chībā Kabīrau jolāhā pure gura te gati pāī (Gurū Grantha, sirī rāg, mah.* 3; *aṣṭh.* 5, v. 3, p. 67).
10. *mārū* vv. 1-2 (p. 1106).
11. *malār*2, v. 2 (p. 1293).
12. *āsā* 5, v. 1 (p. 487).
13. A cowrie is a small shell, worth one *paisā*, or less.
14. *āsā* 2, *rahāū*, the name given to the refrain in the *Gurū Grantha pada*-singing.
15. According to Farquhar, *ORLI*, p. 317, the *Bhaktamāl* was composed between 1585 and 1623. The date most usually ascribed to it is 1585: cf. Grierson, '*Gleanings on the Bhaktamāl*', *JRAS*, 1909, p. 607; 1910, pp. 87, 169. Our referecnes are to the edition by S.B. Rupkala, with *Bhaktisudhāsvāda ṭīkā*, Lucknow, 2nd ed., 1962.
16. *Bhakta-māl* (*mūl*), *chappay* 60, 479.
17. *Bhakta-māl, chappay* 36, p. 282.
18. *Bhaktamāl*, *ṭīkā kavitta* 28-41, pp. 480-91.
19. According to tradition, the *ghāṭa* was the *Pañcagaṅgā ghāṭa*.
20. In Vaiṣṇav sects, the *dīkṣā* is performed by the *Guru* or Ācārya in front of the image of the divinity; besides the *mantra*, the ritual includes the imposition of a string of holy beads (*mālā*) and the sectarian frontal mark (*tilaka*). During the sixteenth century, a number of Vaiṣṇav sects did accept Muslim candidates (converts)—but the latter could only receive *nām-dīkṣā*, 'the *dīkṣā* of the Name', and usually were not allowed entrance into the shrine.
21. Cf. Nevil,, *op. cit.*, p. 226
22. The main Kabīr *rauza* has been described by A. Führer in *Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, vol. ii, p. 224: "To the east of the town, on the right bank of the Ami river, there is the cenotap (*rauza*) of the famous reformer Kabīr-Das or Kabīr

Shah, erected in 1450 by Bijli Khan and restored in 1567 by Nawab Fidai Khan. A little further stands another shrine, dedicated to Kabīr-Das and frequented by Hindūs only."

23. *KF*, pp. 95-97. If Führer's information is correct, the year 1450 would be the *terminus ad quem* for Kabīr's death. Strangely, another Kabīr cenotaph is found in Jagannātha Purī, in Orissa, not far from the great temple: the strange object representing Kabīr looks like a stone covered with dark-blue clothes with a conical cap. It has not been investigated so far.
24. About the names attributed to Kabīr's foster parents, Mohan Singh (*B*, pp. 4-5), remarks that, in Panjab, a Muslim Julāhā is called *nīrawaf* and a Muslim woman of low caste is called *nīmā;* Ahmed Shah (*The Bījaka of Kabīr*, Intr. p. 4) mentions *nurbaf* and *neiman* as the common names of a Muhammedan weaver and a low-born Muhammedan woman in the Panjab.
25. S.K. Varma gives c. 1600 as Anantadās's *floruit*; Mohan Singh (*KB*, pp. 4-5) accepts the date 1588 for the composition of the *Kabīr kī parcaī*; Chaturvedi (KSP, pp. 276) discusses the problem in detail and also concludes that Anantadās must have lived c. Vi.Ś. 1645 (A.D. 1588).
26. Other references to Kabīr are found in various works composed at the end of the sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century—as the *Vinaya-Patrika* of Tulsīdāsa and the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* composed by the Maharashtrian poet Eknātha: though no new information in given by those poets, both stress the fact that Kabīr was low-born.
27. *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī*, Engl. trans. by H.S. Jarett, 2nd ed., vol. 2, p. 141; about Kabīr's double cenotaphs, cf. supra.
28. *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī*, 2nd edition, vol. 2, p. 182. The mausoleum at Ratanpur is also mentioned by Sujan Rae, who draws upon Abū'l Fazl in his *Khulāsat-ut-Tawarīkh* (Delhi ed., p. 43): "At Ratanpur is the grave (or shrine, *mazār*) of Kabīra the Julāhā who, at the time of Sultan Sikander Lodi, had gone to the capital of Reality from the town of Appearance". The mausoleum at Purī-Jagannātha is also mentioned by the French traveller, Tavernier; cf. *Lex six voyages de J.B. Tavernier*, vol. 2, Paris, 1642, p. 441.
29. A collection of short biographies of *Sufi* saints composed in 1590-99. 'Abdul Ḥaq Dihlawī's testimony in *Akhbār-al-Akhyār* (ed. Delhi, 1853) is summarized and discussed in Mohan Singh, *KB*, p. 28, fn.
30. *Dabistān* or *School of Manners*, Engl. Trans. by D. Shea and A. Troyer, Paris, 1943, vol. 2, pp. 186-91. The *Dabistān* does not distinguish clearly between the Vaiṣṇavas, the Bairāgīs and the Rāmānandīs. According to McLeod, (*op. cit.* p. 9), the author of the *Dabistān* relied largely upon his Sikh informants.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 191. A Kabīr tomb is still to be seen at Purī-Jagannātha. Its origin is not clear.
32. Cf. Westcott, *KKP*, pp. 15-16.
33. The enumeration of Kabīr's *avatāras* is found in the *Grantha-bhavatārana*, 'the crossing of the Ocean of Existence' (ed. Narsinghpur, 1908), a *Kabīr-panthī* work in the form of a dialogue between Kabīr and his disciple Dharmadāsa: the contents are briefly analyzed by Keay (KF, pp. 125-6). Though composed in *Braja* verse, the *Grantha-bhavatāraṇ* imitates the *Bhagavad-gītā*, with *Sat-Kabīr* holding the role of Kṛṣṇa: "In every age

(*yuga*), I incarnate myself and I am always present in a manifested (i.e. visible) form in the world. In the *Sat-yug*, my name was *Sat-sukṛta*, in the *Tretā* age, it was *Munendra*, in the Dvāpar age, I was called *Karuṇam* and in the Kali age, I was *Kabīr*". Reminiscences of the Jaina and Buddhist faiths are noticeable in this passage, as 'Munendra' refers to the *Jinā Mahavīra* and Karuṇam to *karuṇā*, the principle of universal compassion, which is one of the two elements to be united together for the production of the *bodhicitta* in Tāntric Mahāyān Buddhism.

34. A compilation of such works was published by the *Kabīrpanthī Svamī* Yugalanda under the title *Bodh-sāgar*, Bombay, Vi.Ś. 1963 (AD 1956).
35. The *Gorakha kī guṣṭī* has been analyzed by Keay, *KB*, pp. 115-17. The poem ends with Gorakhanātha laying down his cap, wallet and banner at Kabīra's feet.
36. Keay, *KF*, p. 130.
37. Westcott, *KKP*, pp. 112-14; the *Nānaka guṣṭ* is among the works that the author known only 'by hearsay'.
38. McLeod, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-6
39. The choice of the eleventh day of the dark *ekādaṣī* of the month of *Māgha* as the day on which Kabīr entered into *samādhi* is evidently dictated by the Vaiṣṇav preference of the author, the *ekādaśī* being, for Vaiṣṇavas, the most sacred of all *tithis*.
40. Rāmānanda's dates are uncertain and very little is known about his actual teachings. He would have been more than 118 years in order to be the real *guru* of all the twelve disciples attributed to him in the *Bhaktamāla*.
41. See Carpenter, *Theism in Medieval India* (Hibbert Lectures, 2nd series, 1919), quoted by Westcott, *KKP*. p. 117.
42. Westcott, in *Kabīr and the Kabīr-pantha*, p. vii, gives no evidence to justify that date, in his Chronological table; the table is not found in the 2nd edition of the same work.
43. Macauliffe (*SR* vi. 140, m/ 1) mentions a work called *Bharat khaṇḍa cha arvachin* (in Marathi?) in which the date of Kabīr's death is given as *śak* 1370 (A.D. 1448); Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 88, mentions another work, *Bhārat brāhmaṇ*, which gives Kabīr's dates as 1398-1448.
44. R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇvism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, Collected Works, iv., Poona 1929, p. 98.
45. Keay, *KF*, p. 28.
46. Cf. Mohan Singh, *KB*, p. 25; Barthwal, *NSHP*, p. 253; Chaturvedi, *UBSP*, pp. 708. Mohan singh denies it on the evidence of the *Firishta* I. 333-4. Abū'l Fazl is silent about the persectution of Kabīr by Sikander Lodī. He mentions the persectuion of a holy man, a Hindū called Bodhan, who was put to death by Sikander Lodī. The latter's reputation for cruelty is so well established in India that a fate similar to Bodhan's could have been attributed to Kabīr: the later would have escaped by means of his supernatural powers.
47. That tradition was accepted by Ghulam Sarvar in the *Khazinat-ul-Asafiyā*, also by S.W. Falloon in *A New Hindūstani-English Dictionary*, London 1879, Preface, p. viii; also Malcolm, according to whom Kabīra "lived in the time of the emperor Sher Shah".
48. *Kāśī me hama pragaṭa bhaye haī rāmānanda citāe*: the line is found in

the *Kabīr* Śabdāvalī, Allahabad, 1908, Pt 2, p. 47—but this work, which was published in four parts by the Belvedere Press in 1903-1914, is a mere compilation of verses collected from very uncertain sources.

49. *rāmānanda rāmarasa māte*: these worlds are found in the *Bījaka*; ed. Vicārdāsa Śastrī, Allahabad, 1928, *Śabda* 77, 4.
50. *tore bharose magahara basio, mere tana kī tapati bujhāī,*
pahile darasanu magahara pāio, puni kāsī base āī.
(*Gu. Rāmkalī* 3, v. 2).
51. *Benares Gazetteer,* Allahabad, 1909.
52. *Journal of the University of Bihar,* Pt 2, Now. 1956.
53. *Kabīra kā janmasthān, Sammelan Patrikā,* Prayag 54, 1-2, p. 17; see also *Kabīr-granthāvalī,* Allahabad, 1970, pp. 9 ff.
54. The whole confuse discussion is dismissed by P. Chaturvedi, *UBSP,* 139-43.
55. *Jaisā magaharu taisī kāsī, hama ekai kari jānī.*
56. *Gurū Grantha, Bilāval* 4, v. 1.
57. The early stages of Vaiṣṇav asceticism in Northern India have not been fully investigated. It seems that, for a long time the Bairāgīs were also called *muṇḍīs.* Similarly, Marco della Tomba describes the Rāmānandī 'Fachiri' (*fakīr*) as shaven. On the close relationship of the ancient Buddhist orders, called *neṛā-neṛī* shaven ones) of Bengal, cf. D.C. Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature,* Calcutta, 1911; M.T. Kennedy, *The Caitanya movement,* Calcutta, 1925.
58. *IS,* p. 151
59. On Kabīr's travels, cf. K.M. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 98; Keay, *KF,* p. 17. On Kabīr's visit to Paṇḍharpur, cf. C.A. Kincaid and D.B. Parasnis, *A History of the Maratha people,* London vol. ii, 1922, p. 107. According to the *Kabīr-i-Manshūr,* Kabīra *met sādhaka*s, i.e. 'Seekers of the Absolute', in such places as Mecca, Baghdad, Samarkand and Bokhara!.
60. *Gurū Grantha, sal.* 197.
61. *Gurū Grantha, bhairavī* 18 (*pad* 24 in KG 2).
62. *Gurū Grantha, Gauṇḍ* 4 (*pad* 23 in KG 2).
63. Mohan Singh, *KB,* p. 43.
64. Cf. Führer, *op. cit.*, p. 224; A.C.L. Carlleyle *Arch. Surv. of India,* vol. xxii, p. 72; H.R. Nevill, *Jaunpur Gazetteer,* Allahabd, 1908, p. 227. Magahar, which is situated only thirteen and a half miles from Gorakhapur, is now in the Basti district.
65. Mohan Singh, *KB,* p. 43.
66. *sagala janamu sivapurī gavāiā maratī bār magahariu uṭhi āiā*
bahutu baras tapu kiā kasī maranu bhaia magahara kī bāsī
kāsī magahara sama bicarī ochī bhagati kaise utarai pārī.
gaürī 15, vv. 2-4.
67. Trumpp, *op. cit.,* p. 463.
68. Macauliffe, *SR,* vi. 138.
69. *Bījaka, śabda* 103, vv. 2-3.
70. Cf. the legend of god Viṣṇu lying in the form of a child on a leaf upon the waters of *pralay*: the story is vaguely reminiscent of the biblical episode of Moses rescued from the waters by Pharaoh's daughter.
71. Cf. M.Y. Kennedy, *The Caitanya Movement,* Calcutta, 1925, p. 27'.

72. Cf. Vaudeville, *Pastorales*, Paris, 1971, Introd., pp. 36-37.
73. Vaudeville p. 65 (Kabir's Biography)
74. Cf. H.P. Nevill, *Jaunpur Gazetteer, Allahal* 1908, pp. 88 ff.
75. H.H. Risley, *The People of India*, 2nd ed. 1969.
76. According to Titus (*Indian Islam*, Milford, 1930, p. 3), "the Koris together with the Kanbis and Kharwas, all low-caste folks, were converted to Islam in Gujarat in the 12th century through Nur ud-Din or Nur Satagar, who come to Gujarat in the reign of Siddha Raj (1094-1143)". It is not known when the *Korīs* of Uttar Pradesh passed to Islam.
77. Cf. Risley, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-7 and 319; S.W. Fallon, in his *A New Hindūstani-English Dictionary*, London, 1878, quotes a number of stories and proverbs turning the Julāhās into ridicule. R.K. Varma (*Kabīra kā rahasyavād*, 9th ed., 1961. p. 178, fn.) suggersts that the legends spread by the *Kabīra-panthīs* about Kabīra's miraculous birth were principally motivated by their embarrassment at the fact that their supposed founder was held to be a 'vile' Julāhā.
78. Mohan Singh *KB*, p. 7, fn. remarks that, "both at Gorakhpur and Magahar, the Julāhās are accounted as Muslims and the Camārs and Dheḍhs as Hindūs". (References as quoted by Vaudeville).
79. Chanchreek, K.L., for detailed study see authors book (1) Koli Jati ka Itihas, (2) Bhagvan Gautama Buddha, (3) Kabir and his Philosophy (4) Sant Ravidas and His Contemporaries, University Publication/Shree Pub. House, New Delhi.

6

KABĪR AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

It is not within the scope of this study to provide a detailed account of the contemporary society in Northern India, during *Turk* and Afghan rule, however, to know the truth about social conditions, pages of history can be perused.

When Kabīr was born there was all chaos, confusion, plundering and tyrannical rule. Buddhist monasteries, temples and centres of learning have already been destroyed and people were making compromises with the invaders, the conquering race. The conquerors have settled down and strengthened their position. For *Hindus* they were still mlechchas, apart from Sudras and low castes of the Hindu stock.

In Kabīr's time the society was mainly comprised of two religions—Hinduism and Islam. Buddhists and Jains were passing their days. In Hinduism there were several religious sects and the society was divided into caste hierarchy—Hindū and the Śūdras. Brahmans and Kshatriyas were still a dominating class while Śūdras including both touchables and untouchables ranked low in the caste hierarchy. Kṣhatriyas in social gradation however were next to the Brahmins and the Vaiśyas were traders and landlords. Neo-Muslims upper and low caste Hindu converts were settling themselves in the society but they were better than untouchables.

With the decline of Buddhism and Hindū orthodoxy the lowest classes, mostly untouchables easily embraced Islam for better social status and security. No doubt between 712 A.D. to 1525 A.D., the Arabs, the Afghans and other Muhammedan races encouraged Islamization to strenghthen their hold on society.

Many peasant and artisan castes who were harassed and

tortured by the dominating Hindū community either were former Buddhists or believed in the teachings of Buddha. Because of their low status in the Hindu social order and they were more attracted towards the religion of the conquerors. In such social conditions convetsions on large scale took place and among Hindu fold.

In the pages of history we see that an Afghan principality Ghazni came into prominence in 977 A.D. Twenty one years later Mahmud decided to attack Punjab plains and looted much wealth. From 1010 to 1026 A.D. his invasions were directed to temple towns like Mathura, Thanesar, Kanauj and finally Somnath. He destroyed Buddhist shrines and Hindū temples as a mad Muslim general. Mahmud's invasions paved way in Northern India for further attacks. Indian rulers, the so called Hindu kings hated and fought with each other and Brahmans continued to misguide and divide the masses in the name of caste supremacy and religion. At the end of the 12th century another fierce attack came from North-West under the leadership of Muhammad Ghuri and the Rajput clans who have fought unceasingly in the 11th and 12th centuries were unable to face these attacks systematically. Poor artisans and peasants suffered much in these troubled days. Buddhism became a history.

In 13th century more Muslim toughs migrated to India from the central Asian countries in search of fortunes and positions. Turks were a cruel fighting people. They believed in the purity of race and did not encourage non-Turks. Thus the Turks got positions. But after Balaban, race rigidites softened and inter caste marriages began among various Muslim races. In due course of time new Muslim settlers got military and administrative placements.

Prolonged wars and invasions after invasions in India during the medieval period turned the Hindūs as a frustrated and defeated race. Even though Hindūs did not sink their caste based differences and *varṇa* system governed the Hindū social order. There was thus no other option to the lower castes either to live as slaves and serfs or embrace Islam. Many low castes of artisans and peasants embraced Islam.

Except a few, the Kṣhatriyas and other martial races lost their sovereignty and surrendered to the conquerors. The new rulers accepted their daughters and sisters as their '*begums*' and adjusted the surrenderers in military assignments, administrative jobs and

even governorship. They were mostly from Rajput races.

But common people were a suffering lot. They were ignored by the Muslim rule as well as harassed by the dominating communities as usual. There was restricted nationlism according to some literary sources. There are some Rasos and Gathas by bards, but at the same time the feudalism and Brahmanism had compromised for social-economic gains.

On the eve of Turkish invasion, *Hindū* society was divided into castes and subcastes according to Varṇas and Brāhmaṇas enjoying a respectable place in the society. Famous scholar Alberuni who came to India with Mahmud of Gazni recorded in his study of Hindū society that among *Hindūs* there were four *Varṇas*—the *Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and the *Śūdras*. There were number of sub-castes in each *Varṇa*. The number of mixed castes had gone upto 64. *Śūdras* and untouchables were a suffering lot and their socio-economic condition miserable.

As we have noticed earlier when Kabīr was born (1397 A.D.) the *Hindū* society was a divided house, which prevented unity among various groups. Kabīr associated himself with the *bhakti* cult, as a true disciple of Rāmānand and became great critic of traditionalism, ritualism, old customs and beliefs, caste system and practice of untouchability. He saw Sūdras and artisans, peasants and craftsmen were an ignored lot in society, in the eyes of religion. All this made him a rebel. Kabīr's influence on masses was most remarkable in medieval India. He revolted against polytheism and preached that loving God with devotion can save the society from decay and degeneration. He disliked idolatory, pilgrimage, priestcraft and favoured *nama jap*, recitation or devotionalism as God helped his devotees. The conception of personal god is the invention of *Bhakti* cult as a means of realisation of God.

No doubt frustrated Hindū mind felt the fragrance of sweet breeze of devotionalism through Vaishnism. It brought social awareness, religious freedom and liberalism.

But a rebel saint, a bhagat, a Vishnav who saved the Hindu society from frustration, disorientation, disintegration was branded by Hindus as Muslim, because of his foster father was a Momin.

Bhkati encouraged feeling of unity amongst downtrodden, as everybody was equal in the eyes of God. Socio-religious revivalism created nationalism. That prepared a ground for rational thought.

Through the poetry of *bhagats* and *saints*, the lower castes

who were mostly artisans and landless labour became aware of their social and religious rights during fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Buddhism though in a decaying state, Vaiṣṇav *bhakti* and various small religious sects including Sufi tragitions influenced the saints to advocate the grievances of the common people who were oppresed by the dominating castes. *Sants* and *Bhakts* (*Bhagats*) were non-Brahmanical devotees of God and Kabīr, the weaver poet was their leader. (*Guru*). He was undoubtedly most radical, reformative and prominent amongst the saints. It is believed he attracted large gatherings during his '*sādhu-saṅgats*' which created confusion among priestly class. In Banaras, Ravidās was Kabīr's contemporary who worked as a shoe worker. He was not sky of his low birth and ancestral profession. It is believed as a true nirguṇa bhagat Ravidās enjoyed respect in society and royal courts. Both Kabīr and Ravidās were harrassed by the priests on several occasions and in several days.

Being contemporary both Kabīr and Ravidās were deadly against Brahmanical supremacy and caste hierarchy. They were social activists and radical saint poets, who wanted a change in the entire social order. They believed in peaceful, and non-violent social-cultural transformation through bhakti which was a voice of equality. They believed people will easily understand that everyone is equal in the eyes of God. Thus being children of God everybody is eligible for his grace and bliss. The message of *bhakti* no doubt mobilised the weaker sections, landless-labour and artisans ṣhudṛa class who have been for long oppressed and exploited in the name of religion and the *Varṇa* system.

Islam encouraged conversion which was opposed by the *sant* movement. Who can deny that *Bhakti* movement did not save and reform the *Hindū* social order. Devotion to Rāma, Supreme Being. can not be preached by any orthodox Mohammedan, though in Mughal age few poets belonging to Muslim race sang songs of Kṛṣṇa. In an age of orthodoxy and caste distinctions, feudalism and Sultanatic system of governance, appreciation of any rebel low caste saint poet, was not possible from caste *Hindūs* and *Muslim* theologions, writers and historians. However, they could not stop the popularity and greatness of either Kabīr or Ravidās who were having mass appeal. Certainty Kabir was super.

Historian Dr.Tarachand and Yusuf Husain believe that *bhakti* movement is a product of peaceful synthesis between two main

religions—Hinduism and Islam.

As a matter of fact Kabīr was totally Gods' devotee and preached communal harmony and universal brotherhood, so did all his contemporaries at a time when ruling *Hindūs* were making compromises with the invaders.

Dr. R.C. Majumdar and Dr. A.L. Srivastava assumed that medieval saints and Vaiṣṇava preachers were Hindū reformers whose ideas and activities were geared towards facing the alleged challenge of Islam. *Bhakti* cult put a brake on en-masse conversions. Teaching of Islam and *Sufiism* were absorbed by the *bhakti*-cult which were oneness and unity.

Kabīr was against Muslim rule. He enjoyed no patronage of any ruling Hindu chief. He opposed Muslim priests for their funny ritualism, specially the sacrifices of animals, and loud shouts while remembering God during namaj. Whatever he spoke, he stood firm in his thinking. He never deviated from his ideology as preached by Buddha.

From the very beginning of his sainthood Kabīr preached ture love to God, devotion to Rāma, who is all Supreme Being and powerful. Brāhmaṇa and priests said that he was a Muhmammedan, a low caste Julāha. But it was Kabīr who saved Hinduism from Islamization and disruption. He was effective and instrumental as a brake to conversions of Hindūs through his teaching of love to God. All *Bhakti* saints followed him and even after his death the tradition continued. None can deny the role of *Bhakti* cult in spreading devotional attitude of the masses as well as reformatory attitude towards social transformation during the medieval period of history. Entire *Bhakti* cult under the leadership of Kabīr served as a becon light, tower of strength to the frustrated Hindū race defeated in the hands of the Arab powers. According to Varna system. Eventhough only on the basis of concocted legends and few fake poems Indian and Western scholars are bent upon proving him a Muhammedan, a mleccha, a Julaha, a *sufi* and not a Hindū *saint* of high order, belonging to *Korī* (Koli) weaver community, which produced Buddha. And much has been quoted in the previous chapters on this theme.

We may mention Charlotte Vaudeville who has documented analytically and chronologically the hagiography of Kabīr on the basis of writings of Christian missionaries of 18th and 19th centuries, European scholars and even caste Hindū writers. They all

have repeated, one after another, in declaring Kabir a Muhammedan Julaha, which is quite unbelievable to true Sikhs worldover, *Kabīr panthīs*, crores of *Kori-Kolis* and a large number of his Hindu followers. Foreign writers have followed what Hindū scholars have written without knowing the damage being committed. Historians say lower castes converted themselves en-masse to Islam, but they have not gone in the reasons that why it has so happened? It is all due to caste distinctions, prevailing untouchability and oppression by the caste Hindūs for 5000 years or so. *Reformer Kabīr, a fearless Kabīr, a radical Kabīr a Ramabhakta Kabir with a tilak on his forehead wearing Ramanami shawl (chaddar) has condemned all such oppressive features in Hindu religion and Islam in his poetry and blamed Brahmins for all social evils. In turn they have declared him mleccha, a barbarian, a Muslim Julaha and even created fake hagiography.*

Both during colonial rule and after independence the study of Kabīr has been made with a narrow vision. Studies made in Hindī and English by upper caste scholars and foreigners seem to be much prejudiced.

Everybody is aware that Kabīr condemned Hindū religious practices, the Brahmanical dominance and priestcraft. He spoke against both Brahmin priests as well as Muslim mullās and maulvies. He fearlessly pointed out the weakness of the Hindū social order and its oppressive features for centuries. He as a social rebel raised his voice against caste system and the practice of untouchability. He restored the right of worship to the common masses, releasing the God from the boundaries of the temple. He created a personal god (*nirguṇa Rāma*) and gave a new concept of formless worship through *Bhakti* to the lover castes. Now no temples were needed, no god's dresses and ornaments, no prasada, no ringing bellls, as God (Vishnu, Hari) resides within everybody's ininermost heart. He and all his contemporaries whom he inspired, guided and raised voice of revolts against all sort of opperssions, and preached equality, fraternity, justice and liberty through *Bhakti* of Almighty God.

His hymns became scriptures. Sikh tradition respected him and included his poems in their holybook—*Guru Grantha Säheb.*

All this did hurt the Orthodox Hindu scholars who are famous for patronizing rumours, half-hearted studies, caste distinctions and narrow out look, who have declared Kabīr as a Muhammedan Julaha, son of a Brahmin widow blessed by Rāmānanda. These are also

useless coined and baseless theories which carrupted the minds of the western writers.

All sayings and verses about Kabīr declaring him Muslim weaver are fake, prejudiced and afterthought, as he being a low caste *Kori* weaver condemns *Hindu* ritualism, or priestcraft in toto in the city of Benaras famous for Brahmin orthodoxy.

The 18th and 19th Century orientalist like John Malcolm, H.H. Wilson and several others mention him as Muhammaden weaver (Julaha) who have certainly ignored all the historical facts. According to historian Tarachand Kabīr and his *Bhakti* movement is a product of synthesis between Hinduism and Islam. Ādi Grantha which originally is a *Sikh* holybook has a limited role as a book of history or literary work. Similarly *Bhaktamāl* of Nābhādās, and *Kabīr Parichai* of Anantadās are only early Vaishnavite literary works not historical documents as they have legendary flavour and much mythology and imagination.

As a matter of fact Kabīr needs no introduction. He needs no evidences, no favours, no sympathisers and historical proofs about his own poetry which is quite strong enough to prove his birth, caste, place and other socio-religious actions. His social and reformative out look is appreciable. His vision is broad based. It is most unfortunate foreign writers mention him as a son of a poor Muhammedan weaver, who spends his childhood as a Muhammedan and his ideology alike Muhammedan, whereas Kabīr is totally a Hindū (*Kori*) weaver, worships God as a *Hindū* devotee, remembers all Hindū gods and mythological deities, speaks peoples language of the Eastern U.P., spoken in Benaras by the commonmen. If orientalist and *Hindī* writers have made a mistake, foreign writers should have not repeated it in their alleged studies on Kabir.

According to *Vasant* Moon Dr. Ambedkar once talking to Dr. P.B. Kane, said in Bombay that Kabīr's voice is more powerful and meaningful than Vedic and *Upaniṣadic* ṛṣis. Kabīr's verses are more relevant then hymns contained in Dharmaśāstras. Kabir certainly reformed Hindu society and gave new identity.

Kabīr is secular, he respects those who are with him in his crusade against ritualism and social inequalities. He is a great soul. Vaudeville uses another insulting term while comparing him with Buddha, who was a prince. *She* says Kabīra was a *Śūdra* (of non-Āryan, impure descent) and a mleccha, a barbarian, since social group to which he belonged was already Islamized. But it is all

baseless. We have therefore to understand the western writers mentality quoted enough in the outgoing chapters.

Non-Āryan Sudras were not impure, they were warriors, artisans, intellectuals, rulers and builders of a great civilization. They became slave when they are defeated being god fearing and peace loving people. They possessed great skills and built fortified cities but were not barbarians like *Ārayans*. It is all the more in great insulting words that *Kabīr* was a mleccha, a barbarian and belonged to the converted Islamic race.

Western scholars cannot have the taste of the sweetness of our dialects whether Braj, *Avadhī*, *Bhojpurī*, *Maithilī* and several others. They do not know our humongous humility. To say whatever Kabīr said in vulgar and full of rough idiom is only a discovery of some polluted western minds, under the so called influence of Brahmanical wisdom.

To maintain secular character of Kabīr Saheb, to prove him free from the cycle of birth and death, to declare him casteless or above caste is the normal practice adopted by our Kabīr *ācāryas*. In their edited works they often treat him neither *Hindū*, nor *Muslim* but above caste and religion, born or found at Lahartāl in Benares on Lotus leaves as an incarnation.

In Peoples language he revived the *upaniṣadic* thought of meditation and developed and conceptualized the worship of formless God alike great sages. His nirguṇa god was within reach of ones heart all the time. He liberated God from the clutches of the priests who acted on the orders of the powerful Brahmanic Cliques. Kabīr's god, was everybody's God, peoples almighty God who helped his devotees irrespective of their low birth. Kabīr cites so many mythological references who have been blessed by God. Only Vaiṣṇava Hindū saint could have thought so radically in the larger interests of the suffering humanity during tyrannical Muslim rule.

We wish utterances of Indian and western writers would stop declaring Kabīr a mleccha, an outcast *śūdra*, barbarian, of a converted Islamised race. In the beginning *Nirguṇa bhakti* was a model of worship for those who were disallowed entry in the temples because of their low caste origin, but gradually it developed as a religious—reformative movement and *bhagats* became more and more radical in their ideology.

Ācārya Rāma Chandra Śhukla, a Hindi scholar first defined the '*nirguṇa bhakti*' and categorised Kabīr, Ravidās, Dādū etc. in

this list. Dr. P.D. Barthwal, from hills, in his earliest English work attracted the attention of the academic circles on the importance of Kabīr. Paraśurāma Chaturvedī, another scholar narrated the importance of the saint tradition of northern India as a socio-religious movement. Dr. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi mentioned that Kabīr movement was greatly influenced by Buddhism and Nātha tradition. Nānak and other Sikh *Gurus* patronized the poetry of Kabīr and other saints and *Bhagats* and made their verses immortal and popular including them in Guru Granth Saheb.

Our historians and scholars, generally use various binary categories—Hindūs *versus* Muslims, Theological *versus* social, Hinduization *versus* Islamization, *nirguna versus saguṇa* (monotheism versus polytheism), while discussing beliefs and practices of non-Brahmanical and non-Islamic communities.

The medieval *nirguṇa sant* movement was led by the lower caste *bhagats* or saintly persons who were either artisans or cultivators by professions. They were pious and strong willed devotees who attracted large followings. Interestingly they are all alive in the minds of the people through their verses and deeds.

In fact in those days when religious worship and study of scriptures and knowledge was monopolised by the upper caste Hindus specially the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas (the priests and the rulers) the Vaishnavite Nirguna *Bhakti* movement gave a powerful blow to these orthodox beliefs and customs of Hindus. And Kabir was certainly that great reformer, saint poet and true devotee of nirguna Brahmna (God) who changed the entire course of social history through his ideology of equality, fraternity and social justice.

7

SAGACIOUS KABĪR

Sagacious Kabir is a name which is remembered in happiness, sorrows and pains, ups and down in life and equally and the time of birth and salvation. His verses, his vanis have been blessed by God to be pious and pure, full of nectar.

Kabīr, a sage and a visionary often says in his poems that he is not a '*paṇḍit*', a scholar or a learned man but a very simple artisan, a weaver. Kabir became a teacher of humanity because of his message of love, equality, communal harmony and social awakening. In a caste ridden much orthodox society, Kabīr condemns social inequalities and defines a Śūdra who is pure and pious, simple and gentle. His *Bhkati* songs awaken the Hindūs to be united and generous towards the poor and exploited class. He stands for universalism and broad mindedness declaring that God is within our own inner heart.

He condemns the orthodox mullas and maulvis who divide the society and through funny rituals befool their own brethern.

His mystic verses are very often quoted as commandments which guides us in our daily life for cordial social interaction.

He is a tower of strength to the weaker sections and a powerful voice of the weak. He is above caste and creed. As a peoples path finder, a prophetic saint he became a legend in his life time.[1] Great Saint Maharāj Charan Singh says, "Saints are men of God, who come here on a mission of mercy, to lead suffering humanity back to the feat of God. That is their only mission in life. They come not to divide, but to unite and are above the narrow distinctions of caste, colour, nationality, and creed. Though when they pass away, their followers lose sight to their teachings and take to various types of ritualism and narrow down the teachings meant for humanity to

particular sects and schools. This gives rise to castes and creeds and even to bigotry and fanaticism"[2] Kabīr lived as a saint throughout his life and worked as a weaver. He preached his message of love and humanism through his devotional bhajans, the vanis.

If Lord Buddha is the light of Asia, Kabīr is certainly the voice of Asia. His social philosophy, his message, his teachings are more and more meaningful and relevant in today's world.

He is a light-house. He is like Parijata, the tree of gods, whose flowers (Vanis) are full of godly fragrance.

Popularity of Kabīr

Kabīr is our guide. He is our teacher. He is a great socio-religious reformer. His devotional, sweet-melodious verses can be heard where Indians have gone in the world, in Mauritius, Fizi, Surinam, South Africa, and even Europe and United States. These can be heard in every Indian village, as great linguist and learned scholar George Grierson says :

"The words of two men of the past can still be heard in every village of Hindūstan. These are Tulsī the abandoned child of a beggar Brahmin tribe, and Kabīr, the despised weaver of Banaras".[3]

Noted philosopher-writer Isaac A. Ezekiel narrating the popularity of Kabīr says :

> "During the First World War, British press correspondents in France were amazed to observe Indian hymns of Kabīr and other saints, while soldiers from other nations took to lighter entertainment. The hymns of Kabīr have echoed on the war fronts of three continents. They have resounded on the battlefields of France, Belgium and Germany; in the death-jaws of the Dardanelles and Kut-el-Amara; amidst the sand dunes of Libya; in the shadow of the pyramids; in the sweltering heat of Iraq and Persia; under cover of the dense forests of Burma, and the rice-fields of Indonesia and Indo-China. They have echoed for some two hundred years and more in India's numerous cantonments from Quetta to Bangalore, in Mhow and Rawalpindi, Ambala, Jullunder, Agra, Poona and Secunderabad, and most of India's other military stations. They have resounded for half a millennium in thousands of villages, in the rolling plains between the Indus and the Ganges; in the heroic land of Rajasthan and the broad table land of the Deccan. They have given moral and spiritual

sustenance to India's illiterate masses, and have supplied them with thoughts and ideas that have been working like heaven in India's social and religious life.

What is the secret of their phenomenal popularity? They make no popular appeal in the ordinary sense. They run counter to the entire thought and action of orthodoxy, still so strong and powerful; they denounce idol-worship still stands supreme; they decry rites and rituals so dear to the common men all over the world; they discount the virtue of pilgrimages and visits to holy rivers, to which millions throng till this date; they laugh at all spiritual superstitions in a language of rough ruggedness unsurpassed in any spiritual literature; they make mockery of thread ceremonies and circumcisions in a land where no caste Hindū can remain without the thread ceremony, and where no Muslim can be a Muslim without circumcisions; they expose to ridicule the Brahmins and the Mullas (priests), the yogis, the tapsvis (practisers of austerities) and ascetics of all types—all still so venerated in India.

This was a heroic achievement at any time; it was specially so during Kabīr's days and in the holy city of Banaras."

"These songs give rapier thrusts at saffron-robed *sādhus* (alleged holy men) and ask, if saffron-coloured clothes could give salvation, what about saffron-coloured dogs; at shaven-headed *bairāgis* (persons practising detachment), and ask if shaving could give salvation, what about the sheep that are sheared twice a year; at the naked '*digambars*' (a certain class of' sadhus), and ask if nakedness could get slavation, what about the millions of animals that go naked all through life; at the 'God-seekers' perched on tree-tops, and ask if perching on trees gave salvation, what about millions of birds; at river-bathers, and ask if bathing in holy rivers give salvation, what about all the millions of fishes; at chanters of "Rāma, Rāma" ("God, God") and ask, if by merely repeating "food, food", our hunger could be satisfied, why is there cooking in every house; at Jains, who hold non-killing as the one essential for salvation, and ask, what about the millions of germs you swallow with every glass of water and what about mother's milk made out of the mother's flesh and blood. They speak of tellers of rosaries, and ask them to see if a persian wheel

ever obtained salvation; of reciters of discourses, and ask them to observe the prattling of parrots; of the scholars of the *Vedas* (Hindū scriptures), and compare them with donkeys carrying loads of carrots that they cannot consume."

Vāṇīs (Verses) of Kabīr are recited in *Sikh saṅgats* and prayer sessions in *Gurudwārās* not only in India, but throughout the world with great devotion and honour to the saint. In Kabīr *maṭhas* and *Kabīr* bhajan programs also his poems and *verses* are sung with much respect.

In all the Universities Kabīr's philosophy is a subject, a theme of study and research. From primary standard to postgraduate classes the teachings of Kabīr are included in the syllabus.

In the words of Kalika Prasad, I.A.S., who also headed a Kabir Gaddi : Kabir is present everywhere, everytime to guide us as a sun, as a moon. He is immortal. Don't tie him in the barriers of caste and creed.

God's name is Kabir. He is ocean of nectar. Kabīr hardly sleeps. He always watches. He guides and guards us. He is a rebel. An extraordinary revolutionary. In the words of Ezekiel :

"Kabīr challenges all authority, temporal and spiritual, princes and principalities, the high and mighty—all authority except that of a perfect master. He goes further and denies the Godhood of the *avatārs* (incarnations) and their power to give salvation, and quotes the *Śāstras* and the *Purāṇas* (Hindū scriptures) to support him. He proclaims in a thrilling song that God does not indulge in the massacre of millions as Śrī Rāma Chandra, the hero of the Rāmāyaṇa, did. He states in another song that God is no advocate of war and pestilence as Śrī Kṛṣṇa was; that God is beyond all 'guṇas' (attributes) and all quality, and does not indulge in the kind of activities participated in by the *avatārs*. And all this in face of the fact that these *avatārs* were worshipped by millions during his days and are so worshipped today.

Kabīr goes still further and refutes the theme that *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva* (the creator, preserver and destroyer), whom millions worship, are equal to the Lord, and quotes stories from the Purāṇā (Hindūs mythological stories) themselves to prove his stand; the lesser gods and goddesses he dismisses as of no consequence—and all this in a land where they are held in great reverence. And yet, as the Rev. F. E. Keay says

in Kabīr and His Followers: "There is probably no author whose verses are more on lips of North India than those of Kabīr, unless it be Tulsidās," and the *Rev. E. W. Ormerod in Hindū Religious Poetry goes to the length of urging Christian churches in India to use some such devotional hymns to make church services popular, saying: "It should not be forgotten that it is in these and similar hymns, so clearly bound up with the ordinary life of the finds its natural expression. And it would appear that any attempt to present Christianity to the people of India must follow a similar course. Mere translation of western hymns, with English conceptions, English metres, English tunes, can never take the place or do the work of this."*

"For sheer vigour of thought and rugged terseness of style, no *bhakti* (devotional) writer can be brought into a comparison with him (Kabīr)," says Rev. Dr. W.O. Orr in *A Sixteenth Century Indian Mystic.*

Comparing Kabīr with Dādū Dayāl (Dādū the merciful), the famous Saint Dr Orr. writes, "In Dādū there is less of the fierce iconoclast and more of the quiet mystic; less fondness for the bold concept and the startling paradox and more for the great simple truths that shine by their own light; less delight in the keen battle of wits, and rapier thrust and skilful parry; and the patient understanding by instruction, warning, an appeal to the false defences in which the soul is tempted to take refuge."

Dr. Orr writes, "It is as a controversialist that Kabīr rises to his supreme heights; he is never so much at home as in the forefront of the battle with falsehood and error, giving blow for blow.....A valiant witness for truth, scorning compromise and dauntless in the face of persecution and opposition."

From the orthodox viewpoint Kabīr was a heretic, with his frank dislike of institutionai religion and external observances. He denounced the whole apparatus of Hindūs and Muslim piety—the temple, the mosque, the priest, the scriptures, as of little consequence in God-realisation. Yet he repeatedly proclaimed that he was neither a Hindū nor a Muslim.

To describe him as a leader of the *Hindū* reformation movement is to descend from the sublime to the earthly. His

denunciation of superstitions, rites and rituals and organised religion and its custodians was incidental to his supreme mission of developing real love for the Lord and of taking true spiritual seekers back to the Lord.[5]"

PRIESTS SPOIL PEOPLE

There is no saint-poet who has such radical feelings as Kabīr, who declares a crusade against priests who spoil people. Kabir condemns social evils, caste distinctions, untouchability, animal scarifices and communalism. There is no other true devotee of God and a sympathiser of humanity than Kabīr, whose verses and sayings are so widely remembered and recited by the people. He is the only teacher and mystic poet, a reformer and rebel. Who is sincerely loved, liked, respected and praised for his utterances and vanis which guide the humanity. His boldness is unique and purposive. He lived and died as an ordinary man, but remembered as a great man, as a prophet. He is not dead, he is an immortal soul. He lives in his verses. He declares that misguided priests of any 'dharma', religion will spoil the life of the innocent people, who follow them blindly :

"Both Muslims and Hindūs
will go to hell,
With Qazis and Brahmins
leading them there.
Both deserve nothing better.[6]"

We can cite one example from Bījaka how religious Kabīr is besides being true and fearless in his thoughts. Kabīr is bold in attacking both Hindu priests and Muslim mullas for thier sinful acts. His following Śabda in Bījak tells their reality :

'Santo pande nipuna Kasai |
bakara mari bhainsa para dhavain,
dila mahi darada na āyī ||1||
Kari asanāna tilaka dai baithe,
vidhi te devi pujāyī |
Ātama Rāma palaka mahi vinasin,
rudhira ki nadi bahayi ||2||
Ati punīta unch kula kahiye;
sabhā mamhi adhikāyī |

inate diccha saba koyi maṇgai,
hansī āvai mohi bhāyī ||3||
Pāpa kaṭana ko kathā sunāvahiṁ,
karma karāhiṁ nīchai |
hama to dou paraspara deśā
jama laye hai dhoṣai ||4||
Gāye baḍhai tehi Tūruka kahiye,
yini te vai kā choṭe |
kahahin Kabīra sunahu ho santo,
kali mahi Brāhmaṇa sote ||5||

(According to Kabīr the 'priestly class are perfect butchers. After killing goats they rush to kill buffaloes. They do not feel sorry for this sinful act.

They take their seats after taking bath and applying the sandal-wood paste to their foreheads. They get the due ceremonial worship of a goddess performed. Then they kill the living being in a moment and cause a river of blood to follow.

They claim themselves to belong to a holy and a high pedigree and are highly praised in the assemblies. Every one receives initiation from them. Friends! the foolishness of the people getting initiated from such preceptors makes me laugh.

They recite the holy tales from the scriptures with a view to reduce the sins of those who hear these talks but they themselves become instrumental in the mean acts like killing the living beings. We have watched the conduct of both the *Hindūs* and the *Muslims*. Really speaking, both of them are misled by the king *yama* (God of death).

Those who kill the cows are called the Muslims. Those priests are, thus, not a whit better than the Muslims. Kabīr Sāheb says, 'Oh Saints! listen, the Brahmins of the Kali Age have degenerated themselves on account of their acts of violence.)"[7]

It is worth remembering that is some temples of Banaras, specially *Durga* temple buffaloes and goats are sacrificed for bliss to the goddess *Durgā*. This practice had continued since long. In the period of Kabīr this animal sacrifice may be perhaps on a wider scale.

In the city of Kasi a number of *paṇḍits* recite slokas from scriptures followed by tantric worship for obtaining siddhi in *Durgā* temple and elsewhere. Kabīr exposed them for this anti-religious

and irrational activities, which no other reformer dared to say even during Muslim rule.

Prophets come on earth to awaken the people. They show right path to the humanity. Kabīr in his prophetic voice shows the right path to the misguided society. His message is the real message of love and equality. As Ezekiel further says that Kabīr was above all worldly things:

> "Though Kabīr spoke sarcastically of idol-worship, he did not come here to abolish idol-worship. Though he attacked the caste system, abolishing the caste system was not his mission. Though he wanted the *Hindūs* and Muslims to live in brotherly love, achieveing Hindū-Muslim unity was not the purpose of his life. Though he criticised the elaborate rites and rituals of Hinduism, he did not do so to make Hinduism more easily understandable by the masses, nor yet to meet the "challenge of Islam" with its simple procedure. He was not interested in the challenge of any religion, for he upheld only the religion of love."
>
> "Though Kabīr used the sledge-hammer to pound the egoism of the paṇḍits (learned intellectuals), he was far from being opposed to scholarship. Though he advocated vegetarianism and declared that the goat whose throat you cut today will cut your throat tomorrow, he did not come to establish vegetarianism. Though he stood for total abstinence, he was no prohibitionist; he was against all compulsion. Though he was against indulgence in sex he stood for normal family life and asked the *brahmacāris* (celibates) if *brahmacārya* could give salvation, what about the millions of castrated beasts of burden."
>
> There was chaos and confusion in the society when Kabir was born. But, as in the words of saintly-philosopher Ezekiel "Kabīr did not come here to establish any new religion or sect, or to reform any society. His one and only purpose in life was to show to the people the right spiritual path. It is, therefore wrong to criticise him for "failure" in abolishing idol-worship or the caste system, as some writers have done. That was not his mission, and to say that he failed in all this because of lack of "positive action" or because of his "contemplative tendencies" is to show utter ignorance of the ways and purposes of mystics and mysticism.
>
> The language of Kabīr, his sharp thrusts, his stinging

sarcasm, his piercing wit and humour, were equipment essential for his time.

Kabīr lived an ordinary life of a weaver, a mystic poet at a period when India was faced on one hand with ruthless religious persecution and forced mass conversion, and, on the other, with a Hindu priestly class which, instead of giving solace to the terror stricken laity, thrust it deeper into superstitious terror in order to fill this own coffers, buttress its own position, and hold down the masses under its heels. Kabīr's language was meant to deal with this situation. Its ruggedness was born of love.

Kabīr was a perfect master, a supreme saint, a *param sant satguru* (supreme saint and spiritual teacher). This is accepted by all the contemporary saints of Kabīr's times. In or about his own time there also lived great saints like *Guru Nanak*, Dhanna, Sen, and Ravidas, and all of them speak of Kabīr in the highest terms; all of them held him in lofty esteem and reverence. So great is the position of Kabīr that hundreds of his songs are incorporated in the *Grantha Sāhib* (Sikh holybook) compiled by the Sikh *gurus* who were themselves perfect masters."

Moreover, many a saints for quite a long time spoke the same language, the same idioms, the same philosophy as Kabir has recited.

Here the term perfect Master needs to be explained. The entire creation is broadly divided into two parts—the mind world and the spiritual world. The mind is divided into three sub-divisions—the material, astral and casual worlds. Those within these regions, which inlcude all gods and goddesses, *avatārs*, ṛṣīs, and so forth remain within the wheel of transmigration. Only those who have by the grace of perfect masters, gone beyond these three worlds are freed from transmigration, and are placed on the final way to reach the Lord."[8]

And certainly Kabir was foremost.

Kabir loved everybody. He was not against any Brahman or mulla personally. He condemned only their misguiding and cheating mentality in the name of Dharma.

Dādū, a great saint, speaks of Kabīr in terms of inspiring love. He says :

Very dear to me is the fine word of Kabīr.
To hear it is pure bliss; greatly do I delight in it.

And again:

The true hero is he who is courageous
in this innermost soul,
Who vanquishes the hostile army of passions.
Such a one was Kabīr in this age of darkness.

Kabīr made no secret of his spiritual position. He says in one of his poems that taking souls back to the Lord had been his mission for ages, and that he had come to this earth during the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Copper Age and the Iron Age. In reply to Gorakhanāth (a famous *yogī*) who asked him:

O Kabīr, when did you become an ascetic?

Kabīr answered.

When He who has now assumed many forms
Had not begun His play of creation;
When there was no Guru and no disciple;
When the world was not created;
When the supreme Lord was alone;
At that time was I a devotee!
Then, O Gorakh, was I doing devotion to the Lord.
At the time that I started on the practice of *yoga*,
Brahma did not exist, nor did Viṣṇu;
Shiva was still unborn.
I became revealed in Banaras,
And Rāmānanda gave me the Light (initiated me).
With me I had brought the thirst for the infinite,
And I have come here to meet Him.
I shall unite with the simple One,
through a simple way.
O Gorakh march with His music and reach him."[9]

(Ezekiel : Kabir the Great Mystic)

"What was the path of salvation that he showed? He makes no secret about that point either. You do not have to go far in search of God, he says, for He dwells within your body—search for Him there under proper instruction and guidance, and you will find Him :

Within this earthen vessel, the body, are gardens and groves,
And within it is also the Lord;
Within this vessel, the body, are the seven ocean and countless stars;
Within the body is the touchstone on which is tested thy spiritual worth,
Within it is also the appraiser, the Lord who tests thee.
Kabīr says, Listen, my friend, thy beloved is within thee.

(Kabir the Great Mystic)

Kabir lived as a weaver, perfect artisan, preached as a perfect Guru, a master but never posed that he was a path finder. When Islam took roots in India he says :

It is not by fasting and repeating prayers and creeds
That one goes to heaven;
The inner veil of the temple of Mecca
Is in man's head, if the truth be known.
Make thy mind thy Kāba,
Thy body its enclosing temple, (mosque)
Conscience its prime teacher;
Offer as sacrifices anger, doubt and malice;
Make patience they utterance of five prayers.
The Hindūs and the Muslims have the same Lord.

This was his universalism. He did not hate any creed or race but guided as a true holyman.

Kabīr does not want us to wait till some other time, till after death, to go to the Lord. He wants us to start on the journey here and now. The monosyllabic "abb" which means "here and now" is repeated a hundred times and over in his songs, for, as he points out:

Those who do not reach the shore now,
How can they cross when dead?[10]

(Kabir the Great Mystic)

Many Western and Indian writers have tried to spoil Kabir. Can they do ? Kabir is an ocean of humanity and love.

"A British missionary writer in his scholarly book on the Life and Teachings of Kabīr suggests that, "It is not at all improbable that no such person ever existed." The author's doubt is cleared away by Carpenter in *Theism in Medieval India*, who says "The authentic notes of a great seer are heard too often to allow us to doubt their source in a mind of profound inner sensitiveness and daring utterance."

As we know Kabīr lived only a little more than six hundred years ago, too near to modern history to be a legendary figure, especially in India whose history runs into tens of thousands of years, and where a span of six hundred years is a part of our living history.

But it is unfortunate that true prophetic saints in India, or, for a matter of that, anywhere else do not write autobiographies, which would be valuable to all seekers; nor do they leave any record of their activities. All the facts regarding their lives are only to be found mentioned in the course of their teachings. Even Jesus Christ did not leave a single written line about his own life."[11]

History tells all greatmen have been tortured upto Christ and even later. Kabir was highly tortured by the Muslim ruler, harassed by the orthodox priests and mullas and even forced by Brahmin priests to leave Kasi. But still he is a living luminary.

Then why in case of Kabir wordly people are still discovering facts of his birth, life and mission though much more has been said about him by the Saintly *Souls* that he was a great 'Seeker of Turth' the world has produced so far. He was a revolt to establish the emp e of Truth, love to God and freedom to the mankind.

About Kabīr nothing is left out to discover. He himself exposed himself as a perfect master, a *sadguru*. There is no weakness found in him. What he said, he practised himself and followed till his last breath. His words are authentic, thoughtful of mysticism. His teachings are true and reformative. He is like an astrologer to predict our fate. He is a revolutionay within us always ready to guide for action.

He smiles though a penniless *fakir* and wealthy persons weep presuing much comfortable wordly lives. There is nothing in scriptures, but enough love, truth and human touch in this weaver's poetry.

> When we wanted Light from Darkness
> Buddha was born as Sun, quite bright
> When we wanted Right path out of Ignorance
> Kabīr was born to guide.[12]

It is a truth, not an exaggeration, when all voices, all preaching, all prayers come to an end or exhausted, the voice of Kabīr begins. It is eternal, godly voice which soothes the mankind.

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8

KABĪR AND KABĪRPANTHA

Kabīr is great for his mystic philosophy, for his radical ideology, attack on social evils and customs. After his salvation his followers have made the *Pantha* a movement of universal brotherhood, peace and co-existence. Reformer Kabīr is much progressive in his social philosophy. In an age of Sultanates and Kingdoms in India when people's voice was crushed and tyranny was law of the land, Kabīr revolted like Greek philosophers against all oppressive features in Hindu society as well as Muslim religious beleifs and narrow mindedness. His spiritual thinking and social revolt became a legend in his own lifetime. He never surrendered to his ideology though he was harassed by the rulers vested interests.

Today, Kabīr and *Kabīrpantha* both have become a symbol of revolt against orthodoxy and oppresseion in all forms. Among backward societies *Kabīrpantha* stands as socio-religious reformative movement and has become a spiritual way of life based on truth and feelings of humanity. Kabirpantha does not believe in caste.

In the past it silently revolted against caste prejudices, religious exploitation, social injustice and hatred, today it stands for social equality and religious tolerance, communal harmony and peace. It is more and more relevant in this materialistic world. It promotes national and emotional integration.

Kabīr broadened the limits of the religion. There is no need to search him in the temples and pilgrimages as he is always with us. Through his mystic vision he discarded all sorts of ignorance which was certainly man made and creation of the priests. He said love the God through recitation (nam jap) by pure heart, with malice towards none.

Kabīr in other words truly liberated Hindū religion from the clutches of the ignorant priests. He exploded the myth of exclusive right of worship of the God by the caste Hindūs alone. He preached God is every where, and can be easily searched with devotion and dedication within one's heart.[1]

Kabīrpantha became a true religion of the masses having faith in the formless God. Kabīr's poetic message helps us in finding and searching the God. It discards all sorts of ignorance and ritualistic forms. The panth started after his death.

There is nobody in Kabīr line, except some acharyas and a vast family of *Kabīrpanthi* followers in India and abroad. As a true saint he spread his message of love, love to God which is certainly love to humanity as discussed in previous chapters. In Kabirpantha movement the saintly and *nirguṇa Vaiṣṇav Bhakti* cult is still alive and in continuity very much on the lines suggested by or the path shown by this Great Teacher.

Ezekiel rightly says : "Saints come to teach us the path of God-realisation and rescue us from the appalling wheel of transmigration. If they have a disciple who has advanced spiritually so much as to be able to carry on the task, he is nominated by the saint and occupies his throne after him. If none is available, the line of the saint automatically lapses. After the passing away of Kabīr, Dharma Dās was enthroned, but it appears that after him no one was competent enough to continue the work and the line therefore lapsed."[2] But Kabirpanthis among Koris-Kolis, Balais, Dhanuks, Tantis, Tantuvais and even Chamars in millions are keeping alive Kabir tradition in a big way.

Even the great sikh tradition started by *Guru Nānak* with a series of nine great *Gurus* following one after another is a great event in the socio-religious history of India. *Satnami* sect of Chhattisgarh has its own lineage, which is quite inspiring in history as a sect in spreading the message of social-religious unity among *Chamārs of Chhattisgarh.* There is a popular saying: 'Dūbā vaṇśa Kabīr kā, upjā poot Kamal' (After Kamāla was born, the family line of Kabīr ended), but certainly not the panth. It is very much alive.

Many British and Christian writers on Kabīr, as Ezekiel writes: "have devoted considerable space to discuss the *Kabīrpantha* (Sect or Cult of Kabīr), its little rites and rituals, and its worship of wooden sandals and other relics supposed to have been left behind by Kabīr.

It is obvious from Kabīr's own writings that he never wanted to establish any sect. He who had opposed tooth and nail all rites and rituals, all outward forms of worship; he who had opposed all castes, creeds, dogmas, theologies, pilgrimages, bathing in holy rivers, visits to mosques and temples; he who declared to the Mullah that his loud cry from the minaret was stupid and asked him whether the Lord, who could hear the tinkling of a microscopic bell tied to the tiny leg of an ant, needed the loud cry ?—could such a saint be a party to all that is being practised in his name today ? Kabir is perhaps misunderstood. God has also been misrepresented, misunderstood in temples, mosques and churches.

"But to come to the *Kabīrpantha* existing today. There are two main sections of the *Pantha*, one with its headquarters at Banaras and other at Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh. The heads of both the orders are elected by the followers. This may be good for inner democracy, but utter nonsense for leadership on the spiritual path. Only a perfect Master knows who is fit or otherwise to be *guru*, certainly not the rank and file. Even Jesus Christ said that he had called the disciples to himself and that the disciples were incapable of recognising him as Master," writes Ezekiel.

No doubt these two Orders have their branches—over forty five of them—all over northern India. Some of the centres are quite wealthy and their life members travel all over the country during summer and winter month singing Kabīr's songs. During the monsoon, they return home for study and instruction."[3]

"The full-time *Kabīrpanthies* are supported by the Order, which is against the teachings of Kabīr who advocates that disciples should earn their own living as he himself did. He who said, "why do you carry the staff in your arm-pit and the begging bowl in your hand, teaching Godliness to others while you yourselves are soaked in arrogance," and quite ignorant of the Lord." Even the Buddha encouraged his sramanas to abandon all worldly things.

He who condemned both the Hindūs and the Muslims as being engulfed in the fire of passions, he who said that both of them were fanatics and ignorant of the Path of the Lord, could not be happy at the sight of the *Kabīrpanthies* going about applying ashes to their bodies and making a show of devotion.

The *Kabīrpantha* has, however, retained some of the main outward teachings of Kabīr which have been incorporated in some fifty articles of doctrine, of which the following are important :

1. *Kabīrpanthies* must devote themselves to the contemplation of *Sat-Puruṣ* (supreme Lord). However, they cannot possibly do it without the inititation and guidance of a perfect Master. Devotion of *Sat Puruṣ* is practically the last stage of spiritual devotion and thus cannot be done unless the earlier stages are crossed.

2. God and Kabīr are one and if anyone thinks that God and Kabīr are not one, he is not fit to be a *Kabīrpanthī*.

Kabīr and the Lord are undoubtedly one, but like other perfect saints, Kabīr always preached that one must go to the feet of the Master or Kabīr of his time to get salvation. The historic Kabīr has done his work and had gone away to become one with the Lord.

3. A *Kabīrpanthī* must serve his Master with body, mind and wealth, and completely surrender himself to the Master. But how can this be done unless you really have a perfect Master?

4. *Kabīrpanthīs* must love and serve each other. They all themselves satsangies (initiates) but unfortunately, sat or the truth is not yet revealed to them. Saints also told their followers, "Love ye one another," but that love is not generated by mere preaching. It is attained by the practice of Nāma or Word devotion.

5. *Kabīrpanthīs* are expected to observe complete non-violence and refrain from giving any pain to any iving creature. They are complete vegetarians and this is consistent with Kabīr's teaching.

6. *Kabīrpanthīs* must be complete teetotallers and eschew all drugs like opium, ganja and charas. This is also in keeping with the teachings of perfect Masters, though by itself it cannot give salvation.

7. The way to salvation is through initiation in the Word or Rāma-Nāma which is, of course, the core of Kabīr's teaching. But initiation in the Word can be done only by a perfect Master.

8. *Kabīrpanthīs* must love all human beings alike; without true love for humanity, there can be no real devotion. This is true. But this love is the product of *Nāma* devotion. It is born automatically when a devotee sees spiritually that all men are of the essence of God.

9. No one can attain salvation without a liberal outlook. This, of course, is an important teaching of Kabīr, who preached breaking away from superstitions, traditions and empty beliefs.

10. A *Kabīrpanthī* must not indulge in slander nor think un-

kindly of anyone. A slanderer carriers on himself the sins of others free of charge, says Kabīr.

11. A Kabīrpanthī must use his body mainly for carrying out the orders of his Master and give no importance to the material values of life.

All this is quite consistent with Kabīr's teachings. Only the soul of it is missing. A perfect Master is the life and soul of salvation. Without him, all religions, *panthas* and sects are empty shells.

It must, however, be admitted that the *Kabīrpanth* has done an immense about of good in carrying a part of the message of the songs of Kabīr to thousands of villages year after year during the last six hundred years. And even if these songs may not have succeeded in bringing all the Panthies or the villagers who hear them to the feet of a perfect Master, even if the true mystic significance of the songs may be lost to them, the ethical teachings embodied in them, and the attack they make on the caste system, Brāhmaṇism, ritualism, idol worship, pilgrimages and asceticism have rendered considerable service in weakening public faith in them."[4]

In India irrespective of caste and creed many people proclaim themselves as *Kabīrpanthīs*. Generally true *Kabīrpanthis* do not drink and eat meat. But same is not applicable to the Sikhs who attach great importance and respect to Kabīr. In *Kabīr maṭhas*, Kabīr temples, Kabīr Caukas and *satsaṇgs* even smoking is strictly prohibited. As Ezekiel writes : "*Kabīrpanthies* are complete vegetarians and teetotallers,and that certainly is a gain. All persons opposed to the caste system love Kabīr because he repudiates the caste hierarchy and upholds the down-trodden.".[5]

Kabīrpanthis live pious religious life following the teachings of the great master. They are not materialist and totally believe in non-violence. In mutual salvation mostly they meet saying '*satnāma*'. A dress code is followed by Kabirpanthis.

As such *Kabīrpanthis* generally wear white robes, and a special boat like long cap on the head.

Mahātmā Gāndhī and his family members were a true Vaiṣṇavites and *Kabīrpanthīs*. Babu Jagjivan Ram himself was head of 'Shiv Nārāyaṇa Sect Gaddi' and a great admirer of Kabīr. He was intrumental in spreading the message of both Kabīr and Ravidās. So also his worthy and learned daughter Smt. Meira Kumar is very much anxious in strengthening the saint tradition of Kabir and Ravidas.

Dr. Ambedkar used to say that his father sang Kabir hymns with such depth of devotion that everyone who heard him was moved to the core and the impression left on the minds of the children was remembered by them right through their life.[6]

Kabīrpantha Leads from Darkness to Light

Yes it is true that *Kabīrpantha* leads mankind from darkness to light. Kabīr lived in the priest-ridden city of Kasi and had battled against ignorance, ritualism and all sorts of priest-craft. He showed the rightpath as a becon light to the Hindus and Muslims, to the untouchables and the working class.

He not only exposed the hollowness of the superstitious practices but also showed the right path in the world of darkness. And much has been said in earlier pages. 'Kabīr says :'

> The world is in darkness and does not know
> That the high-placed lady bedecked and veiled,
> Will come back as a bitch,
> If she takes not the instructions of a Master.

For only as a bitch can her sex-engrossed mind'
Fulfil its lustful purpose born of idleness.

> Kabīr declares that the world knows not
> That a mighty emperor going about
> without a *guru*
> Will be back as an ass,
> And will carry all through life loads
> of potter's clay,
> But after the day's labour will not get
> Even a handful of hay for feed.
> For he must pay for living on other's labour
> And as an ass he can do it best?
>
> —*Kabīr*

(Kabīr says that the body is a store house of darkness. Saints, like Kabīr, tell us that we are the soul, a part of the almighty God. The soul is covered by the mind, which is a part of the universal mind. It is further covered by the causal body and the astral body, and finally with the material body. What do we know of the soul, the mind, the causal and astral bodies? We do not know if they exist at all. Is this not darkness?

With the material body, we function in the material world. After death, we are moved into the astral world where we function with the astral body. If by the grace of the Lord and a perfect Master, we go to higher regions, we function in the causal world with the causal body, with the mind in the world of the universal mind. And if luckily we progess still further, we see ourselves as pure souls, part of the Lord Himself. This is self-realisation, realising what we really are, and this ultimately leads to God-realisation or becoming one with the Lord.

But we are totally ignorant of these several bodies of ours. Can there be a greater darkness than this? Perhaps there can be! And that greater darkness covers the stupendous fact that God pervades everywhere, in every animate and inanimate object, in the sun, the moon and the stars, and the entire creation, and yet we see Him not. If this is not darkness, what is?)

As Kabīr says:

The world is blind,
Engulfed in utter darkness;
But to whom can I explain this?

If there were only one or two, I could explain
to them;
But how can you carry conviction,
When all are misled by worldly desires,
And engrossed in sheer maintenance
of the body?

This life is a horse made of water,
For the human body is mostly water,
And air is the rider,
For breaths keep that body alive.
What a frail structure!
Or it is like a drop of dew,
That vanishes in the twinkling of an eye.

Deep is the river of transmigration,
And unceasing is its flow.
What can be done?
The river has become a trap.

The secret of escape from this plight
Is within thy body.
But thou dost not find it
Because with lamp in hand
Thou searcheth for it outside
(in mosques, churches and temples).

The whole creation is engulfed
In the fire of passions and sorrows,
And consumed by wordly desire and ambitions.
Without the knowledge imparted by the master,
Man, the bond-slave, will keep on
Wandering aimlessly.

Kabīr says, Listen, dear seeker,
A day will come when you will have to pass
from here,
Leaving behind even the loin cloth
covering your nakedness.
Of what value are all thy wordly desires?

—*Kabīr*

Kabirpanthi ignores wordly pleasures and lives a simple ideal life. But not the worldly people. Ezekiel further writes : We struggle for wealth, position and honour; we indulge in greed, lust, anger, pride and jealousy; we commit injustices, practice cruelities, torture, deception and fraud in the process of fulfilling our ambitions. And yet do we know the consequences of it all? Or the true purpose of our life?[7]

Certainly ordinary man forgets God, he practically becomes a machine. But in the end dies empty handed—says Kabir.

This is a open secret Kabīr ignored position and honour, wealth and power, greed and lust. He codemned anger and pride, jealousy and hatred. He preached equality, love, tolerance, communal hermony—and good will. He rejected all distinctions based on caste, colour and creed. He awakened the masses to liberate themselves from *Māyā* (Illusion) and bondage from the cycle of birth and rebirth. He openly proclaimed that human suffering are because if ignorance and indulgence in wordly pleasures. He said no body was high or low on the basis of caste and profession. All were equal in the eyes of God.:

He said God resides within us and people are ignorant who search for Him in the temples, mosques holyplaces and everywhere else. People resort to penances and austerities but God is in our good deeds, helps to needy persons, participation in the suffering of the humanity. To the worldly people he even gave a open call to join his company after leaving all wordly pleasures, wealth and honour. That is *Kabīrpantha* in the true sense. Such a call was for revolt against ritualistic-relgious priestly order, all sorts of injustice, ignorance and darkness.[8] He was a saint who opposed distinctions on the basis of caste, creed and colour.

Our historians and scholars are aware that Lord Buddha was a *Sākya* tribal *Kṣhatriya* and had relations with the *Kolis* another race of tribal *Kṣatriyas*. Both were having blood relations and this tradition has continued till today. Buddhas' mother and even his wife was a *Koli*.[9] Both Shakyas (—Shakyawars) and Kolis follow Kabirpantha.

Great Kabīr was born in this caste of *Koris* (Kolis) and inherited much from Buddhism. *Kori* is synonym of Koli, which is similar to sanskṛtised word *Koliya*.[10] In whole of northern India Koris (Kolis) are followers of Buddha and Kabīr. We can mention one historic fact that *Kolis* and Śākyas were the first and foremost in embracing Buddhism and they were all initiated by the Buddha himself. In Kabir age Koris of Banaras as well as whole of northern India including Bihar and Bengal joined him en-masse. In this belt Kabirpantha is still alive.

David Lorenzen had studies the *Kabīrpantha* tradition and Kabīr legends arguing that 'although the contrast between the *saguṇī* and *nirguṇī* traditions is usually defined in theological terms both by outside observers and by the followers of these two traditions, it is the social ideologies of the two traditions that lie behind and give strength to these differing ideologies. And behind the ideological lie the communities themselves." While *saguṇa bhakti* was a Brāhmaṇical exposure, the nirguṇa *bhakti* centred around the working class, the artisans and peasants. Therefore, Kabir followers were mainly weavers, tailors, carpenters, cultivators, landless labour.

By 'applying the concepts of hegemony and resistance—as formulated by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci—to the religious ideas of medieval sants, Lorenzen—concludes that the *Sāguṇa Bhakti* was elite, hegemonic and Brāhmaṇical while *Nirguṇa* religion was subaltern, contestory and of lower caste. And this is all an

open seeret. Kabir and his conemporary nirguna saints all were from lower castes.

Indian Marxist writers like Dr. Ramvilas Sharma, Dr. Prakash Chand Gupta and Shiv Dan Singh Chauhan however kept mostly themselves aloof from the study of Kabīr or *nirguṇa bhakti* movement, whereas it was deeply studied in the Oriental Studies Division at Moscow. So much so that Russian scholars quite often delievered their lectures an *bhakti* poetry in Indian universities naming it as peoples socio—religious revolt.

It is strange Brāhmaṇical gods and goodesses and *avatārs* (incarnations) are mostly *Kṣatriyas*, and captives of priestly class, the Brahmins; whereas God of Kabīr and other sants is above caste, colour and creed, all powerful, Supreme and formless.

Nirguṇa Bhakti movement is no doubt a revolt against Brahmanical order. Against Varna system, untouchability and slavery. As the leader of this movement was Kabīr his poetry was corrupted to prove him a Muslim born or a son of a Brahmin widow of doubtful character who was blessed by Ramanand to have a son. Is it possible? So much so that Ravidās *vānī* was also corrupted to show that he was Muslim and followed Islamic traditions. Earlier this 'Vani' has been quoted. Chanchreek Writes :

"I studied the *Kori-Kolis* as *Kabīrpanthīs* in my research studies 'Koli Jati ka Itihas' and 'Sant Kabīr : Jivan aur Darshan' in detail for certain reasons. *Kabīrpanthīs* believe he was a Hindū *Kori* weaver poet nad reformer of Banaras. In Rajasthan, both Balais and *Koris (Kolis)* are Kabīrpanthis. They believe Kabīr was a *Kori* weaver and a great mystic saint. All Koris and Kolis of northern India are *Kabīrpanthīs* and proud of him. For them he is a prophet. They worship and remember him as their pathfinder while on work at loom, or in field. His *bhajans* are often recited in religious assemblies and teachings discussed in meetings regularly. *Kabīr* is a symbol of thier social identity following his teachings, *Kabīrpanthī Koris* and *Kolis* have always kept themselves above *māyā* and illusion, involvement in worldly pleasures as well as malice towards none. Their working places and homes are true Kabir temples."

David Lorenzen who has studied the origin and growth of *Kabīrpantha* observes :

"As far as the *Kabīrpantha* is concerned, its history before the nineteenth century is known almost exlusively from tendentious sectarian traditions. Nonetheless, there exist a sizable number of

early references to legends of Kabīr's life that may possibly be products of the early *panth*. Most are today accepted as true by all branches of the *pantha*. They are found in such early texts as Nābhādās's *Bhaktamāl* (ca. 1600), its commentaries by Priyadās (1712) and others, Anantadās's *Kabīr parichay* [or *parachaī*] (ca. 1588), the *Dabistān-i-mazāhib* (ca. 1650), Rāghodās's *Bhaktamāl* (1660) and its commentary by Caturdās (1794), and a number of Kabīrpanthi texts of uncertain age.[11]

The general tendency of these legends,which need not be discussed in detail here, is to make Kabīr more Hindū and less Muslim. A legend relates how his Muslim and Hindū disciples fought over to dispose of his body after his death but then discovered under his shroud only a pile of flowers which they evenly divided.[12]

In one respect, there exists an important difference between the legends accepted by the Kabīrpantha and those accepted by the *Sikh* tradition. In the songs attributed to Kabīr in the *Ādi Grantha* and the *Kabīr-granthāvalī*, reasonably clear allusions are made to his wife, to a son named Kamāla, and possibly to a daughter named Kamālī. Various legends about Kabīr and these family members are current in *Sikh* tradition.[13] The monks of the *Kabīr-pantha*, on the other hand, insist that Kabīr remained all his life and unmarried ascetic. They either deny the authenticity of the songs in question or interpret them away rather in the same fashion that certain Christian churches do the various biblical allusions to Jesus's brothers.

Kabir legends clearly illustrate the rapid Hinduization of Kabīr tradition. Except in the case of the stories of his family life, or its absence, however, it is not clear to what extent these stories are the product of diffused popular traditon as opposed to being relatively conscious creations of the *Kabīrpantha*. The most that we can say is that today each branch of the *pantha* actively fosters them, each in its own variants, often together with fanciful stories of Kabīr's former births and a matching, rather eccentric theology. This is particularly true of various works of the Dharmadās *śākhā* such as Paramānandadās's *Kabīr-i-manshūr* (first published in Urdu in 1887) and Brahmalīnamuni's Sanskṛta *Sadguruśrīkabīracaritam* (1960). The *Surata Gopāl* or *Kabīr Caurā śākhā* has recently countered with the more reserved *Hindī Kabīr kā jivancaritra* (1976) by Gaṅgāśaran Śāstrī, the current *adhikārī* of the Banaras Kabīr Caurā *maṭha*.[14]

The first serious attempt at an academic description of the

Kabīrpantha seems to be that of H.H. Wilson in his famous study of Hindū Sects first published in *Asiatic Researches* in 1828 and 1832[15] Apart from brief discussions in various district gazetteers and the 1891 census report, the *pantha* attracted little attention from outsiders during the nineteenth century. In 1907, Biship G.H. Westcott published his *Kabīr and the Kabīrpanth*, which became a principal source for much subsequent writing on the panth.[16] Also valuable is R.V. Russell's and Hira Lal's *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces* (1916).[17] No Significant improvement on Westcott's work was published until F.E. Keay's *Kabīr and His Followers* (1931), a detailed study based on first hand observation and extensive examination of *Kabīrpanthī* literature.[18] Keay's work has since been partly superseded by Kedarnath Dvivedi's excellent *Kabīr aur Kabīrpanth*, first published in 1965. The revised second edition of Parasuram Chaturvedi's important *Uttarī Bhārata kī Sant Paramparā*, though published a year earlier, relies in part on Kedarnath Dvivedi's work for its discussion of the *panth*.[19] Recently, the anthropologist Baidyanath Saraswati has done field work on the panth, but as far as I am aware, he has as yet published very little.[20] A number of anthropologists, historians and government writers have made passing observations about the activities of the *pantha* in different contexts but do not make it their central object of concern.

Considering the numerical strength of the *panth* and its strategic social and religious importance, its relative neglect by scholars is some-what surprising, all the more so when compared to the ample material published on the person, language and literature of Kabīr himself. In the remainder of this paper I would like first to briefly describe the organization and distribution of the panth, and then to argue the hypothesis that the panth has functioned primarily as Hinduizing agent for marginal groups, mainly Untouchables, Śūdras and Tribals.

According to *Kabīrpanthī* tradition, four of the principal disciples of Kabīr founded four distinct branches (*śākhā*) of the panth. Surat Gopal (or Śruti Gopal) founded the Kabīr Caura *śākhā* centered at Banaras; Dharmadās the Chhattisgarh *śākhā* centered in eastern Madhya Pradesh; Jagudas (or Jagodas) the *śākhā* centered at Bidupur (Muzaffarpur District, Bihar) and at Shivpur (near Banaras); and Bhagodas (also Bhagudas or Bhagavan Gusain), the *Bhagatahī śākhā* centered at Dhanauti (Chapra District, Bihar). In

fact, this historical tradition is very dubious and omits another important *śākhā* of the *pantha*, the Phatuha *śākhā* centered near Patna, said to have been founded by two other direct disciples of Kabīr, the brother, *Tattva* and *Jīva*. Some scholars have suggested that all these branches of the *Kabīrpanth* may date from a time considerably later than Kabīr himself. Another important *śākhā* of the contemporary *pantha* is that centered at Burhanpur in south-western Madhya Pradesh and founded by Puran Sahab in about 1835. Independent monasteries, some with subsidiary centers elsewhere, exist at Purī in Orissa (apparently quite an old monastery), At Hatakesar in Madhya Pradesh, at Badaiya village about 37 miles west of Banaras, and two separate monasteries at Rusera (Rusada) in Darbhanga District, Bihar.[21]

(Babu Jagjivan Ram whole heartedly assisted in the construction of magnificent Ravidas temple at Banaras. Namdev's followers built a very remarkable temple at Lodhi Road, New Delhi. But none cared to build Kabir temple that way either at Magahar or Banaras or in New Delhi.)

However, the two principal branches of the pantha are the Kabīr Caurā *śākhā* of Banaras and the Chhattisgarh *śākhā* with rival headquarters in Damakheda and Kharasiya, both in eastern Madhya Pradesh. The Kabīr Caurā *maṭh* in Banaras is situated on the reputed site of Kabīr's family house and claims to be the original seat (*mūla gaddī*) of the *panth* from which all the other branches derive. The members of the Kabīr Caurā *śākhā*, both laymen and monks, on the average come from castes of somewhat higher status than those of the Chhattisgarh *śākhā*. The Kabīr Caurā *maṭh* at Banaras maintains its authority over a large number of subsidiary monasteries located in northern Bihar-eastern U.P. and Gujarat.[22] It is not clear just how much contact the monks (Kabir saints) of this *śākhā* maintain with lay members of the *pantha*. The Chhattisgarh *śākhā* seems, in this respect, to be much more active. Its chief area of operations is in Madhya Pradesh, especially the eastern (Chhattisgarh) and northwestern (Bundelkhand) district, although it also controls a few centers in Gujarat and elsewhere. The Burhanpur *śākhā* is active chiefly in eastern Madhya Pradesh while the *Bhagatahi* and *Phatuha śākhā* control numerous subsidiary monasteries in central and northern Bihar and even Nepal. The reason for this rather curious geographical distribution of the *panth* has not been adeqately explained. Mostly it seems to stem

from historical accident, although the relative absence of the *pantha* from the Punjab and Rajasthan may result from the appropriation of the songs of Kabīr by the religious traditions of the Sikhs and Dādū respectively. The absence of the Kabīrpantha from all but extreme eastern U.P. may reflect the historical competition of Islam for the allegiance of the lower castes in this region.

The question of the social composition and ideology of the *Kabīrpantha* has also been investigated systematically only rarely if at all. The common scholarly consensus is that the *panth* represents merely one of a large number of hertrodox sects which have arisen periodically in India to challenge the established religious and social and even political order. According to this view, these sects are in essence movements of social protest in the religious guise appropriate to the population of a pre-modern, traditional culture. It is correctly pointed out that most of these movements, including the Kabīrpantha, tend to denounce—with varying degrees of severity—the so-called 'exterior' practices of religion such as elaborate sacrifices, idolatory and pilgrimages, as well as the degrading social inequalities fostered by the caste system. Instead, they preach a simpler and purer religion of the heart in which ceremony is minimized and all men are considered theoretically equal and individual.[23] K.N. Panikkar has further suggested that the appearance of a large number of such movements in the eighteenth century tends to argue against the theory that "the emergence of modern ideas and the development of social protest and religious dissent in the nineteenth century...[was] a consequence of the introduction of European ideas and institutions into India." In his view, this theory "overlooks the elements of protest and dissent in the Indian intellectual tradition and the potentialities of social development in the eighteenth century before the intervention of the British."[24]

This general scholarly consensus, which classes, the Kabīr*pantha* and other sects and indigenous movements of social dissent and protest, undoubtedly contain a large measure of truth. Unfortunately, it also tends towards oversimplification and at times contains an element of wishful thinking. Nearly all new religious movements necessarily arise within a context of serious changes in economic and social conditions, that is to say a situation of socio-economic dislocation and conflict. In part they are protests against these changes and against the social and economic injustices that ac-

company them. They also, however, embody attempts to come to terms with these changes, to create new value systems in which they can be accommodated and their negative, exploitative impact made bearable. In each movement, the relative strength and pecific characteristics of the elements of social protest and social accommodation will be different. They also tend to change as the movements progress. But Kabirpantha was not a sect or religion. It was an assembly or group of nirguna saints—bhagats who simplified religions practices for the masses and condemned social evils.

From this perspective, it is clearly a mistake to evaluate religious (and other) movements simply according to the degree of overt social protest they manifest. Social discontent and the striving toward change are always present, through they may take very different forms and directions. The essential character of any movement basically depends on the values and aims it expounds and the effectiveness of the means it uses to achieve them. In the final analysis, each movement must be considered on its own merits in its own material and ideological context.

The scholarly consensus which classes religious movements such as the *Kabīrpantha* as pro-secular or pro-political social protest movements is often supplemented by a complementary theory which seeks to explain their evident change over the course of time. A number of scholars, especially anthropoligists and sociologists, have noted that the element of overt social dissidence in new religious movements soon tends to get dissipated via a process that Max Weber called the institutionalization of charisma and Ernst Troeltsch the transition from sect to *church*. In the case of India, this process is often identified as the transition from cult or sect to caste. Clearly implied is the idea that the process represents a sort of spiritual hardening of the arteries leading to eventual senility. Nirmal Kumar Bose has asserted this hypothesis with bold clarity :

If we pursue the history of nonconformist reformatory sects of the past, like those associated with the names of Caitanya-Nityānand, or of Kabīr or Nānak (and this may even be stretched back to the time of the Buddha and the Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras), whenever there was a proselytization by various Hindū sects. Through conversion to these movements and sects the tribals attempted an accomodation with Hindū society on terms they found more or less acceptable. The new cults did introduce several cultural values

at odds with the traditional tribal ones, but they permitted the converts to retain a tribal identity and to preserve as much tribal tradition as possible.

The majority of *Kabīrpanthis* belong not to tribal groups but to castes low in the status hierarchy of *Hindū* society. Altough these people are not culturally on the margins of Hindū society in the same way as the tribals, they do share many of the same economic and political disabilities, and, at least in the case of the Untouchables, they hold a socio-religious status inferior even to that of the tribals. Although the functioning of society depends on their labor, on the whole they receive in exchange a disproportionately small recompense in terms of money, status, education, and power. In all these senses they too are marginalized human beings.

That the *Kabīrpantha* should appeal to people of this class is not surprising and needs less historical analysis than in the case of the tribals. It would nevertheless help enormously if we could determine to which castes the *Kabīrpanthis* belong and in what proportions, which *śākhā* are associated with each caste, and whether or not the *Kabīrpanthis* in each caste form endogamous subcastes. Unfortunately, this information for the most part will have to remain unavailable until more extensive field work can be undertaken. From my work among the *Kabīrpanthi* monks, especially those in Benareṣ, however, it is possible to say a little more about the monks' own caste perceptions.

The considerable extent to which the *Kabīrpanthi* marks are sensitive to the values of higher caste society was evident from their reluctance to talk about their own caste origins. The *adhikārī* of the *Kabīr Caura maṭha* would only say that most of the twenty-five to thirty monks living there were of *Vaiśya* or "clean" *śūdra* origin, but he would not let them talk to me about their family backgrouds on the pretext that they had abandoned all family ties when they became monks. The monks at the other *maṭhas* in Banaras, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh on the whole were equally reluctant to broach this subject.

Nonetheless other sources provide partial confirmation of the *adhikārī's* statements. It is common knowledge that the *mahants* of several of the major *maṭhas* of the *Kabīrpantha* in Bihar and eastern U.P. come from the *Koiri* and *Yadav* (*Ahir*) castes, two peasant castes whose members are often owners of their own land. For example, the present *mahant* of the *Kabīr Caura maṭha* in Banaras

is said to be from a *Koiri* family, while his predecessor was probably a *Yadav*. I did learn subsequently that two or three of the approximately forty monks resident in this *maṭha* were in fact that given to the other monks, including the obligation to work as cooks in the kitchen of the *maṭha*.

About the lay members of the *panth*, the *adhikārī* of the Kabīr Caura *maṭha* claimed that the majority of those attached to the Kabīr Caura *śākhā*, or as he prefers the *mūla gaddī*, were of "clean" classes. My subsequent field work in north-western Bihar has tended to confirm this estimate. The principal castes with large numbers of followers of the Kabīrpanth in this region are the *Koiris*, the *Yadavs* (*Ahirs*), and the *Kurmis*. In some areas the *Sonars*, *Malis*, *Gadarias*, *Kahars*, *Kumhars*, *Mallahs*, and *Thakurs* provide substantial number of followers as well. Among the untouchables only the *Chamars*, *Dusādhs* and *Pāsis* are important in this regard.

(But this study is incomplete and inaccurate. As Koris, Kolis, Tantis are the real Kabirpanthis, rest are his followers or keepers of Maths and temples. Some of them are preachers of the panth no doubt. Brahmins had captured temples, dominating OBC's run Kabir mathas.)

In the Chhattisgarh *śākhā* the lay members of the *Kabīrpanth* seem to on average belong to castes of slightly lower status. In Bilaspur, Raigarh and Raipur Districts my interviews said that members of the *panth* were particularly numerous among the agricultural castes of the Chandnahus (or Chandranahus), the Gabels and the Kurmis. The *Sāhus*, *Baniās*, *Panikas*, *Bairāgīs*, Rāvats, *Telīs*, and Kostas were also mentioned, together with the Dalit castes of the *Satnamāīs* and *Chamārs* and the tribal groups of the *Kamavāra* and *Goṇḍs*. For the whole of the Chhattisgarh region Russell and Hira Lal add the names of the *Baghel* Rajputs, the Lodhis and *Kāchhis*, the *Balāhis* and *Koris*, the *Kevats*, the *Dhobis*, and the *Mahars*.[25]

One of the strongest supports of the *Kabīrapantha* in Madhya Pradesh is the *Panka* caste. Russell and Hira Lal identify it as "a Draviḍian caste of weavers and labourers found in Mandla, Raipur and Bilāspur, and numbering 215,000 person in 1911".[26] Today they can be estimated at about 600,000. They seem to be related to "the Pān tribe of Orissa and Chota Nagpur, who are also known as Panika, Chīk, Gānda and by various other designations." In 1911, 84% of the caste were member of the *Kabīrpantha*. The Kabīrpanthis form one subcaste who are contrasted with other *Pankas* who are

called *Saktaha* (*śāktā*). In contrast to the *Kabīrahas*, the *Saktahas* eat meat, drink liquor and ignore other restrictive customs. Intermarriage between the *Kabīrahas* and *Saktahas* is discouraged but apprently does occur.[27] Among the related Gandas in Orissa (especially near Sambalapur) there are four subdivisions, one of which is composed of *Kabīrpanthis* who do not normally intermarry with the other three subdivision.[28]

In most cases, however, Kabīrpanthis do not form endogamous subcastes. When asked about the possibility of intermarriage between *Kabīrpanthi* and *non-Kabīrpanthi* members of the same caste, the *adhikārī* of the *Kabīr Caura maṭha* said that it could and did occur although marriage with other *Kabīrpanthis* of the same caste was generally preferred. Intercaste marriages are not permitted even if both persons are *Kabīrpanthis*. In the case of a *Kabīrpanthi* marrying a *nonKabīrpanthi*, the wife is expected to follow the religion of her husband. If the wife is the *Kabīr-panthi* and the husband is not, however, she is encouraged to attempt to convert him by persuasion. The *adhikārī* stressed that above all this meant abstention from alcohol and meat, for as Kabīr supposedly said in one of his verses : "On account of eating meat and fish and drinking liquor, men will go to hell and their parents as well."[29] It is thus evident that all castes were admitted in the Pantha, irrespective of caste consideration. But Koris—Kolis in toto claimed being a caste of wevers that they were the true Kabirpanthis, born panthis, and this is true.

Most low-caste *Kabīrpanthis* distinguish themselves from other members of their castes first and foremost by their vegetarianism and their abstention from alcohol (and usually tobacoo). Kabīra's rejection of idolatry and other 'external' religious practices is only party honoured. The Kabīr Caurā monks encourage pilgrimages to the *maṭha* at Banaras as well as to the subsidiary centers at lāhartārā (Kabīr's birthplace) and Magahar (the site of his death). The daily service at the Kabīr Caura *maṭha* has also taken on many of the characteristics of *Hindū* temple worship, while the Chhattisgarh *śākhā maṭha* in Banaras gives pride of place to a large image of Kabīr which is daily offered *prasād* in the traditional Hindū manner. Although the monks of all *śākhās* do express some verabal support of Kabīr's attacks on caste pride, few of them I talked to rejected the caste system itself in faver of any idea that all men were created equal.

The emphasis the *Kabīrpanth* gives to vegetarianism and abstention from alcohol needs little explanation. From a Hindū point of view the consumption of alcohol and meat are degrading and polluting practices. Low castes that wish to secure a higher socio-religious status in the eyes of other castes have little other option than to abandon them. A respondent in Saccidānanda's recent study *The Harijan Elite* makes this point with simple clarity :

> Under the influence of *Kabīrpantha* a large number of scheduled caste villagers have changed their food habits. Some fifty years ago some Kabīrpanthis...came to my village. They suggested to the Harijans that the adoption of vegetarianism would bring the end of their troubles and disabilities. Due to their preaching the entire community became vegetarian. Even now the situation is the same.[30] Kabīrpantha is against dirty food habits of Muslims and Europeans. In one way or the other they are very near to Jaina food and drinking habits.

To see the religious insight and biting social ciriticism of Kabīr's verses reduced to little more than vegetarianism can hardly help but inspire cyncism. We must bear in mind, however, that except in a very few cases—most notably those of Basav, Kabīr and Nanak (and perhaps the early materialists)—no influential religious and social critic in pre-colonial India directly questioned the overall legitimacy of the Hindū socio-religious order.

Romila Thapar has aptly remarked with regard to the early heterodox groups, that they objected "not to the system (which was a workable, socio-economic system) but to the brāhmaṇical interpretation of it."[31] Even in the cases of Basav, Kabīr and Nanak the extent to which they questioned the legitimacy of the system is debatable. With some exceptions, this also holds true for the social and religious reformers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Although this papers is not the place to initiate a full-scale discussion of why this should be the case, I would like to conclude with one or two sepculative remarks about this problem. The anwer must lie, of course, in the nature of the socio-religious order and in its interaction with the political and economic aspects of Indian society. Although both these aspects periodically underwent fundamental changes in the course of history, in two important respects they have preserved a significant continuty since very early times.

First, the basic economic unit of the society has remained, to some extent even today, the relatively self-sufficeint village. This has been true even through transformations in the dominant mode of production. Secondly, political authority has remained relatively divorced from religious and social concerns. For the most part (and for somewhat different reasons) *Hindū*, Muslim and Biritish rulers have been content to extract the economic surplus of the villages and leave them to their own religious and social devices. Each sect and caste has been allowed to maintain its own values and social customs so long as they have not attemepted to directly interfere with the practical day-to-day functioning of the rules and customs which govern the interaction of different groups within the hierarchical socio-religious system as a whole. By the time a group somehow managed to win enough economic and political power to be able to successfully challanege the system, it had also gained a status near the top of the hierarchy and lost any interest in overthrowing it. As a result, the only feasible strategy of religious and social critics had been to preach their more egalitarian social vision exclusively to the oppressed lower classes, and to confine the institutional expression of this vision to pacifistic religious sects, usually with a limited caste, class and regional base. The political leaders of independent India have pledged to finally sweep the societal configration bases on high caste hegemony into the dustbin of history. If and when this happens, the liberating potential of Kabīr's message may yet find a more concrete expression."

All India Kabīrpanthi Mahāsabhā

As already discussed here at length, the followers of *Sadguru* Kabīr, the great master are *true Kabīrpanthies*, who follow his teachings in daily life and live peacefully. Kabīrpanthies do not renounces the world like Buddhist monks and are generally householders. No doubt there are monks in Kabirmaths and Kabirgaddis.

Kabīr Saheb showed a way of self support and he himself was never dependent on any body for his food. All the *bhaktas* and saints in the '*nirguṇa bhakti* tradition' have attended to their ancentral profession as a duty of God, a form of devotion. For example Kabīr was a weaver, Ravidās cobbler, Dhannā a farmer, *Sena* a barber, *Sadana* a butcher and *Dādū* a cotton carder and eventhough they were all perfect masters, path finders but humble and dedicated to God, as a true '*Vaiṣṇav*'. At the same time they

were all socially rebel, reformative and much progressive in views and actions. And Kabir (Saheb) was their leader, supreme guide.

Today, *Kabīrpanthies* have their national organisation namely All India *Kabīrpanthī* Mahāsabhā, a federation of all Kabīr sabhās, *maṭhas* and *gaddies*. For the last several decades it is holding national level conferences, seminars, exhibitions; and publishing a monthly journal '*Kabīrpath*' which has a wide circulation in India and abroad among *Kabīrpanthies*. The Mahāsabhā has a small library, a printing press and some publications as well.

Mahant B.D. *Kabīrpanthi*, a Kabīr ācārya is its founder member and chairman and editor of *Kabīrpath*. *Ācārya* Kabīrpanthi has travelled widely in India and abroad preaching the message of Kabīr. He has been a very dynamic saintly person and has become an institution himself.

Kabīrpanthi Mahāsabhā started working in the country with the blessings of first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, with Bābū Jagjīvan Rām as its patron. President Giani Zail Singh took keen interest in the activities of Mahāsabhā being a great admirer of Kabīr and saint tradition, so also President Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma. Dr. Sharma extended his cooperation and blessings when *Kabīrpanthī Mahāsabhā* organised sixth Kabīr Centenary celebrations throughout the country. Madhya Pradesh, Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh also organised a sixth Kabīr Centenary *samāroh* in *Rāṣtrapati Bhavan*. During Kabīr's 6th Centenary celebrations *Mahā Sabhā* functionary K.L. Chanchreek's publication 'Sant Kabīr : Jivan aur Darshan' was broughtout and appreciated amongst academic circle.

In the last four decades the Mahāsabhā has organised thirty national and regional level conferences on Kabīr philosophy and has honoured Kabīr *ācāryas* and *Kabīrpanthī* activists, besides bringing out special numbers *of Kabīrpath*.

The activities of the Mahāsabhā has boosted the morale of the Kabīrpanthies as well as popularised the Kabīr Philosophy[32] during the last four decades.

But after the death of Mahant Kabirpanthi in 2004 the activities of Mahasabha have weakened.

First International Conference on Kabīr Philosophy

Thus Maha Sabha took great pains in organising the first world conference on Kabīr philosophy, inviting all the ācāryas of the promi-

nent and existing Kabīr gaddies at Sapru House, New Delhi, form all over India. *Kabīrpanthi* delegates from the following countries participated in this first ever historic meet: Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand, Burma, Kuwait, Dubai, Qater, Mauritius, England, Holland, and U.S.A. Messages from various Heads of nations, Ambassadors of several countries, religious and spiritual heads, learned scholars and researchers on Kabīr philosophy from America, Europe and Russia were received. Number of delegates and active Kabīr participants touched nearly 700 persons who stayed for three days in Delhi and participated in different sessions and programmes.

The three day conference began at New Delhi with inaugural function at Sapru House Conference Hall on 27th December, 1991. The international conference was inaugurated by Giani Zail Singh, former President of India. No grants and financial help was obtained from any government on Kabirian lines.

In his welcome address, eminent writer K.L. Chanchreek, welcoming Hon'ble Giani Zail Singh and the participating delegates, observers and invitees said that this is a historic event in the Kabīr tradition when participants from all over India and abroad have gathered to discuss the teachings and the philosophy of a *Sadguru*, a great poet-philosopher and reformer who took out the humanity from darkness to light, from destruction to reconstruction, from differences and hatred to communal harmony. Even after six hundred years of his passing away, his message of tolerance, peace, non-violence, goodwill and a just social order is relevant and worth following.[33]

Earlier Subject Committee which met under presidentship of Delhi's prominent social leader Krishna Swaroop a renowned Kabirpanthi finalized the agenda of the three day international Kabīr meet.

The theme of the Conference was based on the philosophy of Kabīr Sāheb. In his inaugural speech Hon'ble Zail Singh proclaimed Kabīr was a Kori bhagat and a revolutionary thinker and philosopher, as well as a great social reformer. He also honoured all delegates as well as *mahants*. Ācārya Sukhmann Dās Sāheb (*Uchehara gaddī*) and Mahant Śrī Mohan Dāsa Sāheb, aged 103 years (Kanpur) were presented roll of Kabir Honour.

Mahant Bhagwan Das has laid great stress to the philosophy of *Satpuruṣa* Kabīr and said all *Kabīrpanthis* desire world peace. Sat Kabīr Sāheb had taught about the unity of the human race,

the equality of man, social justice and it is these teachings that greatly impressed the young Mahatma Gandhi and led him to fight not only for the political freedom of India but also for the upliftment of the downtroddens. The teachings of Kabīr Sāheb are as urgent and relevant to us now as they were in his very days. All delegates were unanimous that the message of Sāheb carries a sense of urgency and must be disseminated to the world.

On the second day there was a Kavi *Sammelan* on Kabīr poetry and *bhajan* recitals by *Kabir saints* and other *Saṅgīta Ācāryas.* The programme was held under the presidentship of Sant Indramaṇi Mahārajā (Haryana).

On the third day the programme was organised under the presidentship of Mahant Bhagwandas and there was the exposition of old manuscripts that were obtained from Huzoor Caturānan Sāheb. Mahant Dr. Bhūpat Dāsa Rai, Mahant Dayā Dāsa. Śrī Premnārāyanā Gandhi and other sādhus also made a deep analysis of the spiritual life of Kabīr.

Among the resolutions voted during the conference the following are cited:

(i) The moola (original) *samādhisthan* of Kabīr Sāheb at Magahar is a place of great cultural and Kabīrian importance and should form part of the cultural heritage of humanity. Unesco and Goṿt. of India should take necessary steps to rebuild it in a befitting manner.

(ii) A plot of land not far from the Magahar samādhi of Kabir Saheb must be given by the state to *Kabīrpanthi* Mahāsabhā for the erection of a "*Viśwa Kabīr Bhawan*". This building should have a library and museum for peserving old manuscripts and sufficient grant for the publication of these manuscripts.

(iii) It was decided that contact with all Kabīr centres, mathas, gaddis throughout the world should be maintained regularly and the activities of the Akhil Bhāratiya Kabīrpanthī Mahāsabhā strengthened.

(iv) In 1992 a special *Kabīrpanth* meeting should be held in Holland under the chairmanship of Śrī S.S. Shudwa President of Holland *Kabīrpanthi* Mahā Sabhā.

(v) The next World *Satguru* Kabīr *Sammelan* should be held outside India, specially in Mauritius[34]

(As decided in the meet, a special convention was organised in Holland and International Conference in Mauritius.)

Second International Kabīr Conference

The second international conference on Kabīr philosophy was held in the Republic of Mauritius on the fifth, sixth and seventh December 1993. Delegates all over the world attended this historic second world conference on Kabīr.

Kabirpanthi Mahasabha several months in advance requested the then External Affairs Minister, Raja Dinesh Singh to financially assist the World *Kabīr Panthi* Mahāsabhā so that Indian delegation may participate in the conference at ease, but no travel grant or financial assistance was given.

However quite a good number of Kabīr ācāryas, Indian litterateurs and Kabīr activists participated in the conference meeting expenses from their own pockets.

It was all the more a historic international Kabīr session held at Mauritius where a decision was endorsed to celebrate the six hundredth anniversary of this mystic poet and social reformer world-wide in June 1998.

Mauritius Prime Minister's Message

In his inspiring message, Prime Minister of Mauritius, Hon'ble Anerood Jugannath said "it is matter of great pride that the *Kabīrpanthis* of Mauritius have convened an International Conference on *Jagat Guru Kabīr Sāheb* under the patronage of the Ministry of Art, Culture, Leisure and Reform Institutions. This conference will drive home the full dimensions of our multi-cultural society and will no doubt provide an insight into the rich Indian culture."

The Prime Minister further wrote in his message "that 'Kabīr taught the message of brotherly love, tolerance and simple union with God. His soul elevating message is strikingly relevant in a world where some parts are torn by strife, conflict and division."

Rāma Kṛṣṇa Mission's Message

Swāmī Krisṇarupānand of Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission, Mauritius in his inspring message said :

"...Great saints come in this world out of their abounding love for the suffering humanity and live amongst us to guide and inspire human being through their lives. They demonstrate in their

lives the essence of our holy scriptures and leave behind the path of peace and bliss.

The life of *Satguru* Kabīra is the life of religious harmony. He succeeded to a great extent to bring the unity between the Hindūs and Muslims, the crying need of the then India.

His teachings touch the hearts of the people and inspire one to search for the truth. His teachings also made a fervent appeal to all for human brotherhood, social equality and spiritual oneness irrespective of any caste, creed or religion.

His teachings are equally important now to the world which is facing so much problems."

The President of the Republic of Mauritius, Hon'ble Cassam Uteem in his Message said :

"The Republic of Mauritius is once again very proud to have been selected for an International forum—the Second World *Satguru* Kabīr Conference. The credit for the honour thus done to the country goes to the Kabīr *Mandir* Organisation. To all the participants, particularly the overseas delegates, I have much pleasure in extending, through this Souvenir Magazine, my warmest greetings and a very cordial welcome.

Kabīr was an extraordinary oral poet, philosopher, preacher whose sayings are sung in many parts of the world. Though illiterate, he was a man of sharp intellect, robust commonsense, mystic vision and had a perfect command of language. He used to exhort his audience to shed their orthodoxies in favour of an intense, direct personal confrontation with Turth. Throughout his life, Kabīr cautioned his disciples against formalistic traditons of worship, prayer and pilgrimage. He was most learned among intellectuals and holiest among saints. And these virtues were god gifts.

He led the simple life of a weaver but he brought a sublime message to mankind, he preached freedom from the trammels and fetters of existence as the way to an exalted life. Śrī Kabīr made it the object of his life to reconcile the Hindūs and Muslims of his time. He used to say "God abides in him within whose hearts is truth." He called himself a son of Rāma and repeatedly told his followers that Hindūs were of the same clay as Muslims and others.

Mauritius which can be said to be representative of the Universe on a small scale is the cross-roads of many civilizations and the harmony in which Mauritius live every day is an example to humanity. The message of Śrī Kabīr not only points at such har-

monious cohabitation but also enjoins that we live in such harmony and pass on his teachings to one and all.

I have no doubt that the teachings of Shri Kabīr help to further strengthen the already strong bonds of brotherhood that exist between the different ethnic groups in Mauritius and to serve mankind as a I wish the Conference very success."

President of Kabīr Association of Canada, J. Dāsa in his message said :

"It was with great plesure that I read your letter announcing the forth-coming World Kabīr Conference to be held in Mauritius, on December 5, 6 and 7, 1993. It was also my wish that such a Conference should be held, so that *Kabīr Panthis* from all over the world could congregate and establish brotherhood and communication. On behalf of the Kabīr Association of Canada, I congratulate you and your organization for arranging this World Kabīr Conference.

Satguru Kabīr's gospel represent the highest spiritual teachings which can be obtained anywhere. His teaching are for all the people, whether they are kings or paupers. And he gave his teachings openly for all the people who would care to benefit by listening to them. He taught quite impartially and so he was able to exclaim :

> Kabīra khaḍā bazar me, sab ki mange khair;
> na kāhū se dostī na kāhū se bair.

Only a saint of the highest calibere can make such a statement. *Satguru* taught that we are all the same at birth, as God intended us to be. People created the divisions according to castes, cultures, religions and doctrines. These divisions create disharmony and often violence, as we witness throughout the world. *Satguru's* simple teachings of love and brotherhood, irrespective of castes, colours and creeds, can bring harmony in this world.

When former President of India Hon'ble Zail Singh visited Kabīr Caurā some years ago, he stated that the teachings of Bhagat Kabīr Sāheb are so important for everybody in the world that they should be translated into all the languages, and made available for everyone. He recognized the impact *Satguru's* teaching could have in the world in bringing about peace, love and harmony. Terrorism can be abolished through teachings of brotherhood and love of humanity.

Satguru Kabīr was first in various fronts : (1) the first to be recognized as the father of *Hindī* poetry; (2) the first to introduce the concept of *Sant Mata*; (3) the first to introduce *sahaja yoga*, or *sahaja mārga* resulting in *sahaja samādhi*; (4) the first to reduce the loftiest spiritual teachings from its former message of love in peoples language *(bhāṣā)* for the average person; (5) the first to be accepted by both Hindūs and Muslims, as either *guru* or *pīr*; (6) the first who was raised as a saint bhagat, but accepted as Hindū *guru*; (7) the first in the long line of the more "modern" *sadgurus*, who have followed in his footsteps, or taught what he taught. (8) So also first to abolish Caste, colour, God distinctions and promote oneness or unity.

Satguru Kabīr holds a unique place in spirituality. It is not easy to categorize him as belonging to one school or philosophical thought, or another. He was a "universalist" and a supreme mystic. Anyone who truly follows the teachings of *Satguru* Kabīr will discover an inner peace, love, contentment and harmony, which will set him free from physical, mental and religious bondage.

May this conference be successful in kindling the Divine Light in the hearts of all participants. In the service of *Satguru.*"

General Secretary's Message

The General Secretary of the World *Kabīrpanthī* Mahā Sabhā, K.L. Chanchreek, said in his message that the teachings of Lord Buddha, Christ and Kabīr alone can save the humanity, as the human race is facing the challenge of nuclear and chemical warfare, and worldwide terrorism besides hunger and illiteracy in African and Asian Countries. Like Buddha and Christ, Kabīr showed right path to the people, when there was all chaos—political, social and religious in Indian Society, Kabir condemned hatred, caste divisions, and narrow social vision and preached the spiritual message of love, tolerance, good will, and friendliness. The World Community can still learn much more from his teachings and this Mauritius International Kabīr Conference will definitely think upon the holyman's farsighted thought of mutual understanding and self-realisation. UNESCO and World Governments should come forward to preserve his home (Kabir Chaura) and Samadhi (Magahar) as places of cultural heritage.

International Mauritius Meet : A Historic World Event

For the first time in its six hundred years of existence the *Kabīr Pantha* is having a world conference on Sri Kabīr Sāheb outside India. During these last six hundred years the history of humanity has witnessed drastic changes and at the turn of a new century no man can claim to be an island in himself. No one can dream of the exclusive survival of his own religion or sect at the destruction of others. This is an erroneous hope. Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. This conference on *Śrī Satguru* Kabīr outside India shows that Śrī Kabīr is not only an Indian concern nor in the least, the monopoly of a few *Mahants* or *Gaddipatis*, of some *Kabīrpanthis*. Apart from the joys of meeting each other delegates, intellectual and other followers of Śrī Kabīr must not go on repeating *sākhis* and *sabads* but must try to bring these into practice in their daily life.

The Conference aims to establish branches of World *Kabīrpanthī* Maha Sabha in all countries where *Kabīrpanthīs* reside and should be welcomed as a noble move. One of its most sincere objective is to foster brotherly love not only among Hindūs but to facilitate better communication mechanism with our brothers of other faiths. This will at very high level play an important role in the promotion of world peace.

The conference is also concerned with the dissemination of the Śrī *Sat Guru* Kabīra literature. It is a matter of great sadness that there is a great "lacune" in that respect. The message of the great master has not only a certain uniqueness but it also carries a certain sense of urgency. It appeals to the heart of any sensible human being. Dissemination of Sri Sat Kabīr literature is now an imperative. It is a matter of great happiness that the construction of the Lahartāla Dhāma Mandir shall have a significant part of it devoted for publications of books, magazines, articles and research meant for world-wise diffusion. Last but not least the conference desires that Śrī Kabīra and his works be acclaimed as belonging to the culturage heritage not only of India but of humanity. For this objective to materialize works of good standard must be presented to the UNESCO. It is good to note that the UNESCO has already produced some fine work on world teacher

Śrī *Satguru* Kabīr. And even shown interest to protect his Benares Matha and Maghar Samadhi.

It is certain that this conference shall be highly instrumental in implementing the above objectives, let us hope so.[35]

Kalika Prasad, I.A.S. said that being in Buddha Circuit, the Government of India and U.P. Government are requested to build and develop Magahar shrine in a befitting manner.

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9

KABĪRPANTHĪ COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

Kabirpanth is above caste and creed lines. Most of the Kabirpanth acaryas and mahants are from Vaish or higher strata backward communities. Some upper caste Punjabis, Gujratis are also Kabirpanthi mahants. The rest are followers.

Thus Kabīr has a large family of his followers belonging to several castes. However among original and pure *Kabīr Panthī* communities we can mention some castes, who trace their origin or link with Kabīr, which are as follows : *Kori* or *Koli*, Balai or Balahi, *Julaha*, *Kabīrpanthī* (Julaha), *Panka*, Tānti, *Dhanak* (Dhanuk) and *Jogī*.

Kori or *Koli* is traditionally a caste of weavers and found all over India. The *Balai* or *Balahi* are mainely found in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. Their ancestral profession is also weaving.

The caste of weavers which came into prominence in medival period is Kori, *Julaha* and *Kabīrpanthī*. They are synonyms and found in Punjab, Haryana, J&K, Delhi, U.P., Rajasthan as well as Himachal Pradesh. Panka is found in Uttar Pradesh, some parts of M.P. and Tanti in Bihar, both are offshoots of *Kori-Koli* weaving caste.

Dhanuk in Haryana and Delhi are traditional weavers and also known as *Kabīrpanthī* and Julaha. Jogis and Naths are mostly *Gorakhpanthis* but recite Kabīr *bhajans*—Gorakh vanis and observe much yogic and ritualistic practices.

However Gorakhnath temple having large complex etc. at Gorakhpur is also controlled by influential upper caste mahants.

Besides low caste communities who are traditionally *Kabirpanthis*, there are several high communties who follow teachings of Kabīr not only in India, but in other countries. Sikh community world wide has great respect for bhagat Kabīr and other saint-poets.

Present generation of Western writers on Kabīr like Charlotte Vaudeville, Linda Hess, Daniel Gold and few others are perhaps not fully aware that after *nirvāṇa* of Kabīr Sāheb Hindū Julahas and *Kabīrpanthis* which are offshoots of *Kori* (*Koli*) do exist as Hindū communities tracing their origin from the great teacher Kabir Saheb and found throughout northern India. The Koris-Kolis were called Julahas (weavers) during Muslim rule. They are primarily weaving communities and in several states included in the list of Scheduled Castes because of their low social status. They declare themselves followers of the Buddha and Kabīr. Because of reservation in services and other benefits many fake Punjabis declare themselves as Kabirpanthis.

Kori and *Koli*

According to Russell and Hira Lal "Kori is a Hindū weaving caste of northern India, as distinct from the Julāhas or Momins who are Muhammadans. In 1911 the Koris numbered 35,000 persons, and resided mainly in Jabulpore, Saugor and Damoh. Mr. Crooke states that their name has been derived from that of the Kol caste, of whom they have by some been assumed to be an offshoot. The Koris themselves trace their origin from Kabīr, the apostle of the weaving castes. He, they say, met a Brāmaṇa girl on the bank of a tank, and, being saluted by her replied, 'May God give you a son.' She objected that his word could not fail; and a boy was born out of her hand, whom she left on the bank of the tank. He was subsequently adopted by a weaver and was the ancestor of the Koris. Therefore the caste say of themselves : "He was born of an undefiled vessel, and free from passion; he lowered his body and entered the ocean of existence." This legend is a mere perversion of the story of Kabīr himself, designed to give the Koris a distinguished pedigree. In the Central Provinces the caste appears to be almost entirely a functionaly group, made up members of other castes who were either expelled from their own community or of their own accord adopted the profession of weaving. The principal subdivision is the Ahirwār, taking its name

from the old town of Ahar in the Bulandshahar District. Among the others are Kuṣṭa (Koṣta), Chadār, Katia, Mehra, Dhīmar and Koṭwār all of which, except the last, are the names of distinct castes; while the Kotwārs represent members of the caste who became village watchmen, and considering themselves somewhat superior to the other, have formed a separate. None of the subcastes will eat together or intermarry, and this fact is in favour of the supposition that they are distinct groups amalgamated into a caste by their common profession of weaving. The caste seem to have a fairly close connection with Chamārs in some localities. A number of Chamar-Koris belong to the sect of Rohidās, and some of their family names are the same, while a Chamār will often call himself a Kori to conceal his identity. For the purposes of marriage they are divided into a number of bainks or septs, the names of which are territorial or totemistic. Among the latter may be mentioned the Kulhariya from *kulhāāri*, an axe, and the Barmaiya from the bar or banyan tree; members of these septs pay reverence to an axe and a banyan tree respectively at weddings. After a century Koris (Kolis) who call themselves Kabirpanthis in present day Madhya Pradesh have changed altogether and there is much awakening in them.

According to Russell, ''The marriage of persons belonging to the same sept and also that of first cousins is prohibited, while a family will not, if they can help it, marry a daughter into the sept from which a son has taken a wife. The rule of exogamy is thus rather wide in its action, as is often found to be the case among the lowest and most primitive castes. At the betrothal the father of the girl produces a red cloth folded up, and on this the boy's father lays a rupee. This is passed round to five members of the caste who cry, 'So-and-so's daughter and So-and-so's son, Har bolo (In the name of Viṣṇu).' This completes the betrothal, the father of the boy giving three rupees for a feast to the caste-fellows. A girl who is made pregnant by a man of the caste or any higher caste may be disposed of in marriage as a widow, but if the man is of a lower caste than the Koris she is finally expelled. The lagan or paper fixing the date of the marriage is written by a Brāhmaṇ and must not be shown to the bridegroom in the interval, lest he should grow as thin as the paper bering his name. While he is being anointed and rubbed with turmeric the bridegroom is wrapped in a black blanket, and his bridal dress consists of a yellow

shirt, pyjamas of red cloth, and red shoes, while he carries in his hand a dagger, nut-cracker or knife. As he leaves his house to proceed to the bride's village he steps on two clay lamp-saucers, crushing them with his foot. When the party arrives the fathers of the bride and bridegroom sit together with a pot full of curds between them and give each other to drink from it as a mark of amity. The binding portion of the marriage consists in walking round the sacred pole and the other ceremonies customary in the northern Districts are performed. The bride does not return with her husband unless she is adult; otherwise the usual gauṇa ceremony is held subsequently. When she arrives at her husband's house she makes prints of her hands smeared with turmeric on the wall before entering it for the first time. The remarriage of widows is freely permitted; the second husband takes the widow to his house after sunset, and here she is washed by the barber's wife and puts on glass bangles again, and new jewellery and clothes, if any are provided. No married woman may see her as she enters the house. The husband must give a feat to the caste-fellow, or at least to the pañchāyat or committee. Divorce is freely permitted on payment of a fine to the pañchāyat. When a man takes a second wife a sot or silver image of the deceased first wife is hung round her neck when she enters his house, and is worshipped on ceremonial occasions."

"A child is named on the day after its birth by some woman of the caste; a *Ḃrāhmaṇ* is asked whether the day is auspicious, and he also chooses the name. If this is the same as that of any living relation or one recently dead, another namė is given for ordinary use. A daughter-in-law is usually given a new name when she goes to her huaband's house, such as *Baḍī* (elder), Majhlī (second son"s wife), Bāri (innocent or simple), Jabalpurwāli (belonging to Jubbulpore), and so on. If a woman has borne only female children, the umbilical cord is sometimes put in a small earthen pot and buried at a place where three cross-roads meet, and it is supposed that the birth of a male child will follow. Children whose shaving ceremony has not been performed, and adults dying from snake-bite, cholera, smallpox or leprosy, are buried, while other are burnt. Children are carried to the grave in their parents' arms. On the return of a funeral party, liquor, provided by the relatives of the family, is drunk at the house of the deceased."

"The Koris worship the ordinary Hindū deities and especially Devī. They become inspired by this goodess at the *Jawara* festival

and pierce their cheeks with iron needles and tridents. Every family has a household god or *Kul-Deo* to whom a small platform is erected; offerings other than animal sacrifices are made to him on festivals and on the celebration of a marriage.

During the last one century Koris-Kolis of Madhya Pradesh have become much advanced.

Those of the caste who are *Kabīrpanthis* abstain from animal food, but the others eat the flesh of most animals except tame pig, and also drink liquor. There social status is very low, but they are not usually considered as impure. Their women are tattooed on the right arm before marriage, and on the left after arrival at their husband's house. Like several other low castes, they do not wear nose-rings. The principle occupation of the caste is the weaving of coarse country cloth, but as the trade of the hand-weaver is nowadays precarious and unprofitable many of them have forsaken it and taken to cultivation or daily labour. Mr. Nesfield says of them: "The material used by the *Kori* is the thread supplied by the *Dhunia* (Bahna); and thus the weaver caste has risen imperceptibly out of that of the cotton-carder, in the same way as the cobbler caste has risen out of the tanner. The art of weaving and plaiting thread is very much the same process as that of plaiting reeds and grass, and converting them into baskets and mats. This circumstance explains the puzzle why the weaver caste in India stands at such a low social level. He, however, ranks several degrees above the Chamār or tanner; as, among Hindūs, herbs and their products (cotton being of course included) are invariably considered pure, while the hides of dead animals are regarded as a pollution." This argument is part of Mr. Nesfield's theory that the rank of each caste depends on the period of civilisation at which its occupation came into being, which is scarcely tenable. The reason why the weavers ranks so low may, perhaps, be that the Āryans when they settled in villages in northern India despised all handicrafts as derogatory to their dignity. These were left to the subject tribes, and as a large number of weavers would be required, the industry would necessarily be embraced by the bulk of those who formed the lowest stratum of the population, and has ever since remained in their hands. If cloth was first woven from the tree-cotton plant growing wild, the business of picking and weaving it would naturally have fallen to the non-Aryan jungle tribes, who afterwards became the impure menial and labouring castes of the villages.

Koris (Kolis) are honest, pious and true followers of the Buddha and Kabīr since ancient and medieval days. But the jealous Brahmin dominated society coined vulgar and imaginary legends about this caste. Russell and Hira Lal have noticed some legends :

"The weaver is the proverbial butt of Hindū ridicule, like the tailor in England. 'One Gadaria will account for ten weavers'; 'Four weavers will spoil any business.' The following story also illustrates their stupidity: Twenty weavers go into a field of *kāns* grasss. They thought it was a tank and began swimming. When they got out, they said, "Let us all count and see how many we are, in case anybody has been left in the tank." They counted and each left out himself, so that they all made out nineteen. Just then a Sowār came by, and they caried to him, 'Oh, Sir, we were twenty, and one of us had been drowned in this tank.' The Sowār seeing that there was only a field of grass, counted them and found there were twenty; so he said, 'What will you give me if I find the twentieth?' They promised him a piece of cloth, on which the Sowār, taking his whip, lashed each of the weavers across the shoulders, counting as he did so. When he had counted twenty he took the cloth and rode away. Another story is that a weaver bought a buffalo for twenty rupees. His brother then came to him and wanted a share in the buffalo. They did not know how he should be given a share until at last the weaver said, "You go and pay the man who sold me the buffalo twenty rupees; and then you will have given as much as I have and will be half-owner of the buffalo." Which was done. The ridicule attaching to the weaver's occupation is due to its being considered proper for a woman rather than man, and similar jests were current at the tailor's expense in England. In India the weaver probably takes the tailor's place because woven and not sewn clothes have hitherto been generally worn, as explained in the article on Darzi." But there is not truth in these stories. These were coined by vested interests to defame the followers of the Buddha and Kabir.

The fact is if Koris (Tanti-Tantuvai) have not manufactured cloth, people may have been naked and uncivilized. In northern India Koris are still true followers of great weaver poet Kabīr.

According to William Crooke in the Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces of Agra and Oudh, presently Uttar Pradesh, "Kori is a Hindū weaver caste. They follow teachings of Kabir their name has been (perhaps?) derived from that of the

Kol caste, of whom they have by some been assumed to be an offshoot. In Sanskrit, *Kaulika*, in the sense of "ancestral," has also come to mean "a weaver." According to their own story, the Saint Kabìr was one day going to bathe in the Ganges, and met a Brāhmaṇ girl who saluted him. He said in reply—"May God give you a son." A boy was born. She was virgin and became ashamed and left the child on the banks of the river. Thus Kori (Koli) caste came into existence. He got his name because he was born of a virgin (*kuārī*) or of a girl untouched by man (*korī*). Hence the verse popular among them—

Kori korê kalas kê, nirgun kāyā;
Kāya dhānkê apanī bhava sāgar āya.

"Born of an untouched jar, of him free from passion, he lowers his body and enters the ocean of existence."

They are probably an occupational caste derived from various sources. But it is only a legend. Kolis (Koris) is an ancient caste and existed even before Aryan invasion. They have deferred by caste Hindus because of their association with both Buddha and Kabir, as mentioned.

At the last Census 1901 the *Koris* were recorded in a large number of principal sub-castes :—Aharwār, *Balāi*; *Bhadauriyā*, which is also another Rājput sept; Bhainhar; Bunkar (*bunna*, "to weave"); Dhaman; jaiswār, who from the town of Jais in the Rāe Bareli Distict; *jatua*, who say they have some connection with the *Jāts* or were born direct from the matted hair (*jaṭā*) of Śiva; *Juriya*; Kabīrbaṇsī, called after Kabīr, the fore-father of the caste; *kaithiya*, who spring from the Kāyasths; *Kamariha* or *Kamariya*; *Kanaujiya*, from Kanauj; *Katua*; Korchamra, who spring from Chamārs, Kustha; Mahurê; Odh or Orh; Parsutiya (Sanskrit, *prasava*, "procreation"); Shakya, Sakarwār, of those from Fatehpur Sikri; *Saṅkhwār*. There are many other sub-castes spread over the province. Thus in Shāhjāhānpur we find Jaidwār, Kanaujiya, Kachhwār, Manwār, Gaṅgapāri, or "those from beyond and Ganges, Baṁswār, Baiswār, Katyār, Patra, Gujarāti, Khatiya, and Chapar. In Hamīrpur are the Kutar, Kamariha, Jaiswār, Sakhwār, Dhiman, and Sunwāni. In Bijnor those who practise the occupation of applying leeches on patients are called Jonkiyāra (*jonk*, "a leech"). In Etāwah are the Mahur, Sakhwār, Bhandauliya, and Chandauliya. In Mirzapur they class themselves as Camār-Kori who follow the usages of Camārs and

the *Kori* who connect themselves with Kahārs. Here they say that they are emigrants from Udaypur. The Juriya or Joriya of Faizābād claim to be Brāhmaṇs and immigrants from a place called Katwi in the Jaunpur District. They admit Brāhmaṇs, Kṣatriya, Vaiśyas, Ahīrs, Kurmīs, Murāos, and similar people into their caste. This generally occurs when they have contracted illicit intercourse with women of the tribe. They are worshippers of Mahābīr and Bhāgawati, to whom they offer sacrifices of sheep and goats. Formerly they used only to weave in silk; now they make cotton cloths and do masory. The *Koris* have been extraordinarily fertile in the development of sub-divisions. The complete Census list conatain no less than 1,040 names. After 100 years or so these surnames have changed and Koris (Kolis) have adoted various surnames.

In Hamīrpur, they are reported to have a special form of introducing the bride into her husband's house. The oldest man of the household prepares some cakes fried in butter, known as *māen*, and offers them with the sacrifice of a pig a local godling known as *Baltai*. Then comes the *nihāran* ceremony, when three wheaten cakes are baked, which the newly-married pair tread under foot, and are then allowed to enter the house. There are regular marriage brokers in Hamīrpur, each of whom receives a pair of loin-cloths (*dhoti*) contributed by the parents of the pair at betrothal, marriage, and the coming home of the bride, should she not have arrived at puberty when the wedding takes place. In most cases, however, the marriage is arranged by the sister's husband of the boy—apparently a survival of the matriarchate. A woman married by the *Karā* ceremony is not allowed to enter her husband's house in the day-time; she must do so secretly and at night. Hence of such marriages the proverb runs—*Kālā munh, andhiyāre pākh*, "with a balck face and in the dark fortnight of the month." A widow cannot re-marry by the *Karāo* form until at least the thirteen day of mourning for her late husband are over. Authcrities differ as to whether they admit outsiders into the caste.

The Koris are all Hindu Kabirpanthis. In Faizābād they are said to follow Sivanārāyaṇī sect. In Bijnor they are *Kabīrpanthis*. This is also the case in Hamīrpur, where their religious ceremonies are performed by the daughter's husband, another relic of the matriarchate. To the West they also worship Zāhirpīr and the *Miyān* of Amroha and Jalesar, and to the East the Pānconpīr and Śītala Mātā. Today though many of them worship Devi of Nagar Kot

and Jwala Mukhi, but Kabirpanthi Koris do not believe in Hindu gods and goddesses.

Koli or Kori is an important ancient community of India and also known as *Hindū* Julaha, *Kabīrpanthi*, Tantuvai and Tāntī in certain parts of India. But during the last four-five decades they have united themselves under one banner, and one organisation, All India *Koli Samaj*. This community has its ancient history, though found in all the states of the Indian union, it is not clear whether northern *Kolis* had anything to do with the southern Kolis, specially in matters of profession, marriage relations etc., however socially and culturally they have declared to be of one origin. For centuries exist there grassroot level Kabir Sabhas in villages. Bhajan sessions are held and Kabirs Teachings repeated.

There are several legends and beliefs regarding the origin of *Kolis* or *Korīs*. They claim to be one of the ancient communities of India and since the darkest says of human history Kolis on Koris have helped in building a civilized society from almost a savage, naked and barbarous state by developing the art of weaving as well as navigation. This helped in abandonment of nudity and encouraged higher stage of social development.

In all probability Kolis or Koris are founders of Indus Valley civilization. Discoveries at MohenjoDaro and Harappa (now in Pakistan) prove people were materially prosperous, built lexurious houses, developed art of spinning and weaving, worshipped mother-goddess, sacred tree and phallic emblem (ling worship), controlled river system for agriculture and have social and trade relationship with neighbours. The pre-Āryan Koli (Kori) civilization was destroyed by Āryans.

In Buddha's time *Koli*-Śakyas who were of the same race re-constructed and developed the same civilization in Kapilvastu and Rāmagrām, viz. fortified cities, maintained Police administration, sizeable army, built dwelling units, assembly halls, Parliament, developed irrigation system and water resources, art of weaving and promotion of industries. In Buddhist literatue there is enough material on Koli and Śakya Kṣatriyas.

The 18th and 19th centuries surveys about Kolis (Koris) conducted by the colonial rule are not very authentic. These are vague and unscientific, whereas Kolis-Koris have been a society of status since Kabir's time but exploited and oppressed by the Raj.

One should not forget that the Buddha, Ashoka and Kabir

Saheb have been born in this caste which is having written history.

During colonial rule the *Kabīrapanthi* weavers known as *Koris*, *Kolis*, *Julahas* were suspected as radicals and the Englishmen ridiculed them spreading rumours of various types. According to Paṇḍit Sundarlal the Kori weavers in Northern India were crushed by the British rule. Their thumbs were cut so that they may not weave. Many died of starvation and many committed suicide. Karl Marx has written that wells in northern India were full of bones of the Kori weavers. Between 1700 to 1857 millions of Kolis (Koris) *Kabīrpanthis* died due to colonial policy of ruination. In 1834, Governer General, Lord William Ventick wrote to the British Emperor in his despatch that in India the Kori-Koli weavers have been dying of starvation and their bones are all spread over in the fields of northern India." Much research is needed on this topic.

After the end of the misrule of East India Company in 1858 the British crown took direct control of British India's administration. Kabirpanthis took part in the first war of independence known as Sepoy Mutiny (1857). The Jhani Battle is famous where Koris fought with the Britishers.

There is nothing new if British researchers of the 19th century pass remarks, ridicule and spread rumours about *Kabīrpanthis*, *Kori-Kolis* or *Julahas*. Due to decline of Mughal power and internal quarrels among Hindū Kingdoms there was expansion of East India Company's influence in Bengal, Madras and Bombay presidencies and several other places.

The followers of Kabīr raised a banner of revolt againt the atrocities of the East India Company and in return Kabirpanthi weavers were tortured, harassed and even mercilessly physically liquidated. Jawaharlal Nehru, Pt. Sundarlal, world renowned communist ideologue Karl Marx, R.C. Dutt have writen on this massacre of Hindu and Muslim Kabirpanthi weavers. Muslim Ansari : Momin. Weavers are Kori-Koli. converts.

According to K.S. Singh : "Koris are distributed throughout Uttar Pradesh. The sex ratio among the *Kori* is 887 females per 1000 males. A considerable number of them, i.e. 16.67 per cent, is returned from the urban sectors. They speak in the different dialect of the Indo-Aryan language, *Hindī*, and use the Devanāgarī script. For inter-group communication too, they use the *Hindī* language. They are non-vegetarians and worship Hindu gods and goddesses.

They are divided into twelve endogamous subgroups, namely

Aharwār, Banbata, Dhiman, Haldiha, Jaiswar, *Kabīrpanthi*, Kaithia, Kamalvanshi, Kamariha, Mahor, Sakyawar and Shaṅkhwar and these subgroups are of equivalent status in relation to one another. Educated ones call themselves Tantuvai, a Rig-Vedic term for weaver. Each of these subgroups is divided into exogamous *gotras* such as Chachondia, Kashmore, Khirwar, Kotharia, etc. Junior sororate and junior levirate are permissible. Adult marriage and monogamy are the marriage rules observed. Marriages are generally arranged through negotiation. The vermilion mark, bangles and toe-rings are the marriage symbols for women. Dowry is given in cash and kind. After marriage residence is patrilocal. Divorce is permissible with social approval and divorce compensation is given to the aggrieved party. Either spouse can seek divorce and after divorce, the children are the father's responsibility. Remarriage is permissible. They live either in nuclear or vertically extended families. Sons inherit the father's property equally and the eldest son succeeds to the familial authority. Women have a role in economic activities though they do not have decision-making powers. Ceremonies at the naming, tonsuring (*muṇḍan*) and first feeding of cereals (*annapradān*) are observed. Marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence and the marriage feast is hosted by her parents. They cremate the dead. Death pollution is observed for thierteen days. The mortal remains are disposed off in holy trivers. Ancestors worship is not observed.

Weaving has been the traditional occupation of these people. But they are also involved in agriculture. Beside, some are also engaged in skilled and unskilled labour and are employed in different government and priavte services. According to the 1981 census, 33.80 per cent of the total population is returned as workers (55.00 per cent males and 9.90 per cent females). Of them, 42.74 per cent are cultivators, 36.85 per cent are agricultural labourers and 10.65 per cent are in the household and other-than-household industries, i.e. their tradtional occupation of weaving. The remaining 9.76 per cent of the workers are enaged in various other services.

Their traditonal caste *panchayat* deals with offences like adultery, rape and divorce. The forms of punishment are restitutive, generally in the form of fines payable in cash or kind. They profess Hinduism. They have their own community deities like *Bhuiyar* and *Devī*. Their sacred specialist are Brāhmaṇs whose main role is to perform rituals. Weaving and cloth embroidery are the crafts

associated with them.

Their attitude towards family planning is favourable; couples prefer three children and use modern methods of family planning. Fair-price shop facilities are available. Through their attitude towards saving is favourable, they still depend on moneylenders and shopkeepers.

In **Madhya Pradesh**, the **Koris** are distributed in Indore, Khargone, Khandwa, Dhar and Ujjain districts. They trace their origin from Kabīr, the apostle of the weaving caste. They are primarily found in rural sectors. Though the region comes under the Malwa areas, the Kori speak in *Hindī* with an impact of *Mālwī* and are also conversant with the *Nīmaḍī* language. The script commonly used in Devaṅgarī. The Kori are non-vegetarians but abstain from taking beef or pork. Their staple cereal is bread made out of jowar or wheat.

The Kori are divided into six exogamous clans—Rāṭhor, Dādore, Sohar, Goel, Chetak and Solaṅki. The clan name are used as surnames. Marriages are fixed by their elders through negotiation. The age at marriage varies from twenty to twenty-two years for boys, wheareas of girls it ranges from eighteen to twenty years. Cross-cousin marriage, levirate and sororate are prohibited. Toe-rings and vermilion (sindur) are the marriage symbols for women. Divorce and remarriage are permitted with the consent of their community council. Vertically extended families are predominant. Women actively participate in economic, social and ritual activities together with their men-folk. The naming ceremony is observed. Birth pollution lasts for six days. Before three days of marriage, both the bride and the bridegroom are smeared with turmeric oil paste at their respective houses and this ritual is known as *haldi-lagna*. The essential part of the marriage ceremony is the circumambulation of the sacred pole. The dead are cremated. Purificatory rites are performed on the eleventh day.

The *Kori* are well-known for their traditional occupation of weaving, which is still practised by many of them. Some of them are agricultural labourers, whereas a few are employed in the government service. A few *Kori* families have purchased powerlooms. They sell their products through middlemen and transactions are made in cash. According to 1981 the census, out of their total population, 34.88 per cent are workers (50.70 per cent males and 17.12 per cent females). Of them, 24.88 per cent are engaged in

manufacturing and processing, i.e. their traditional occupation of weaving, and 2.83 per cent in trade and commerce. However, a good number of them are returned as cultivators (27.67 per cent) and agricultural labourers (28.74 per cent). Only 4.26 per cent of the workers are engaged in construction, and the remaining 11.62 per cent are engaged in various other services.

The *Kori's* traditional caste council, the *Chattrī Kori Samaj*, plans and implements welfare activities and also settles disputes. Imposition of cash fine is a form of punishment inflicted by the council. Intercommunity marriages are prohibited and persons marrying outside the community are excommunicated. They are Hindūs and their *Kuldevī* is Tuljāpurī Mātā.

The Kori accept water and cooked food from the Brāhmaṇ, *Kolī*, *Kurmī*, *Mālī* and *Darjī*, but not from the Dher, Sutar and others. Formal education is favoured for their children. They have a positive attitude towards modern medicare. Their attitude towards family planning is also favourable. Some of them have purchased handloom machines from the loans secured through the IRDP. They are dependent on moneylenders, middlemen and shopkeepers on many fronts. While original Kolis are fishermen and agriculturist in **Maharastra**, the *Kori* believe that they have descended from Mahāṛṣhi Kaśyap. According to another version, the ancestor of the *Kori* was born out of the union of Kabīr with a Brāhmaṇ girl (Russell and Hiralal, 1916). They are believed to have migrated from Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh to their present habitat. They are distributed in *Bhaṅḍāra*, Nagpur and Amaravati districts. They speak in Bundelkhāṭ among themselves and some of them are also conversant with Marāthi. Devanāgāri is the script used. They are non-vegetarians. Their staple food consists of *jowar*, rice and pulses like *tur*, *moong* and chana. In Ahmedabad and Surat Koris are plenty in number. They have migrated from U.P. They have their own All India Kori Mahasabha and believe in Kabir.

They are an endogamous community and are divided into a number of surnames such as Bide, Kuntare, Khopse, Diwan, etc. which are exogamous in nature. They belong to the *Kaṣyap gotra*. Junior sororate is practised by them. As marriage symbols for women, vermilion (*sindūr*), the marriage locket (*maṅgalsūtra*) and toe-rings (*jorwe*) are of great significance. Neither dowry (*hunda*) nor bride price (*dej*) is prevalent among them. Divorce (*farkati*) is settled by the community council and only the husband can initiate a divorce

proceeding. They live in nuclear families, but joint families are also common. In the absence of sons, the property is inherited by the daughters. The widow also gets her deceased husband's property. Their women help in agricultural activities, supplement the family income through their earnings and take part in socio-religious activities. They obsrve pre-delivery rituals which end with *ottibharna* for the pregnant woman. The *chhatti* ceremony is observed after the fifth day of birth. Rituals like the name-giving ceremony (*barsa*) and the *muṅḍan* ceremony (*jahllar*) for both male and female children are observed. marriage rituals constitute *sagāī* (fixation of marriage), the erection of a paṇḍāl (*maḍwā dalna*), the worship of clan gods (mayen *pūjā*) and the finally marriage (*śādī*). In case of suicide and snake bites, they bury the dead, otherwise they cremate them. They observe death pollution for thirteen days. They profess Hinduism and worship all Hindū *gods* and goddesses. Kartar is worshipped as a family diety. They also worship *Maridevi*, *Alop Devi*, *Dullha deo*, Sakaria, *Kalka*, etc. They worship Mahāṛī Kaśyap as their clan god. They Satyaṇarāyaṇ pūjā.

The traditional occupation of the *Kori* was selling fodder-grass. Presently their occupation is mainly related to labour, the selling of fruits and agriculture. A few of them are employed in services. According to the 1981 census, 42.76 per cent are returned as workers (55.17 per cent males and 27.51 per cent females). Out of them, 23.35 per cent are engaged in manufacturing, processing, etc. which is indicative of their traditional occupation of weaving. About 26.29 per cent are cultivators, 23.20 per cent are agricultural labourers, 6.77 per cent are engaged in rearing live stock and are in forestry, and 4.85 per cent are in trade and commerce. The remaining 15.54 per cent of the workers are engaged in various other services.

Now they can easily enter into any public place without any restrictions. They are in favour of formal education and have a positive attitude towards family planning. They prefer modern medicare. They have achieved good progress in the field of education and their literacy rate, according to the 1981 census, is 39.63 per cent. Both males and females have achieved better literacy rate of 53.46 per cent and 22.63 per cent, respectively.

In **Orissa**, the ***Kori*** are also calied *Koli*, *Koly* and *Kuli* Malhar and are distributed all over the state but their major concentration is in Mayurbhanj district. Their total populations, according to the

1981 census, is 286 (159 males and 127 females). The Indo-Āryan language, Oriya, and the Oriya cript are used for both inter—and intra-group communication. They are non-vegetarians and take egg, meat and fish. Rice is their staple food.

They are divided into different non-hierarchial *gotras*, namely *Bhagha*, *Chaula*, *bela*, *Sadasa*, *Gangalawa*, *Nageswar*, etc. *Patra*, *kaur* and *Behara* are their surnames. Cross-cousin marriage (with the mother's brother's daughter) and sororate (junior) are permissible. Polygamy is allowed in rare cases. Women use the vermilion mark, and glass and shell bengles as symbols of marriage. Bride price is settled by parents and is paid both in cash and kind. Nuclear families predominate over the vertically extended ones. Women have a role in weaving and in agricultural operations. During pregnancy, they observe a pre-delivery ritual called *ponchu*. Birth pollution is boserved for eleven days. The final purificatory rites are performed on the twenty-first day (ekosia). Marriage rituals are observed both at the bride's and the groom's residence and these are performed in a paṇḍāl (*maṇḍāp*). Death pollution is observed for ten days. The dead are either cremated or buried.

They are a landless community and their traditional occupation is weaving. Bullock-cart driving and daily-wage labour are their secondary occupations. Both barter and cash transactions are in existence. Due to land-lessness, the number of persons engaged in cart-driving, weaving and daily-wage labour has increased. From the census returns it is observed that out of their total population, 40.21 per cent are workers (54.09 per cent males and 22.83 per cent females). Out of them, 21.74 per cent are engaged in manufacturing and processing, i.e. their traditional occupation of weaving, 12.17 per cent are cultivators, 19.13 per cent are agricultural labourers, 3.48 per cent are in rearing livestock and 4.35 per cent are in mining and quarrying. The remaining 39.13 per cent are engaged in various other services.

They are Hindū and worship their family, village and regional deities like *Nuakhia*, *Gomoto*, *Sitali*, *Thakur* and *Raja*. They share water resources and cremotoria with certain communities of equal rank. Participation in the traditional fairs and festivals like *Nuakhia* and Marlor is common.

Their attitude towards education is favourable and their literacy rate, according to the 1981 census, is 26.57 per cent. Their males and famles have achieved a 37.11 and a 13.39 per cent per

cent literacy rate, respectively. Various socio-economic factors create obstacles in the pursuance of their education. They use both modern and indigenous medicare systems. The impact of family planning programmes is poor and they prefer to have more children. They avail of the faciiities of the ICDS and the rationing system.

The British created confusion by classifying Koli and Kori community separately. In fact throughout India Kolis and Koris are one and the same community.

They are all Kabirpanthis. Follow teachings of Kabir.

The term *Koli* or Kori is used to signify the residents of *Kullu*, in the same sense a *Dagi* or *Sippi*. It is also used as a synonym for the Chanal who have taken to weaving. They are believed to be those outcaste Kanets who volunteered to remove carcasses in the absence of a Chamār when disease had claimed the lives of a large number of cattle. According to Rose (1919), the term Kol is used in three distinct senses: first, in a territorial sense as it denotes a resident of *Kullu*. Secondly, it denotes the *Koli* of the hills who are the same as the Dagi and in the third sense, it is used for the *Chamar* in south-east Punjab who have taken to weaving. Ibbetson (1916) writes that the Koli of Delhi and Hissar divisions belong, in all probability, to the great *Kori* or *Koli* tribe of Chamar whose headquarters was on Oudh and their usual occupation was weaving. Quoting Cunningham, he mentions that the hills of Punjab were once occupied by the true Kolian race belonging to the same group of the Kol of Central India and that Koli of the hilly region are probably their representatives. The Koli are widely distributed in **Himachal Pradesh** where their total population is fairly good. Out of their total population, 97.83 per cent are returned from rural areas. There dialect and dress differ from one region to another. They speak in *pahāṛī* and the *Devanāgarī* script is commonly used.

The Koli are a numerically dominant community, but they rank quite low in the regional caste hierarchy. They occupy a lower position than the *Lohar*, *Bajgi* and *Barhai* but are slightly above the *Chanal* and *Dumna*. Marriages are settled through negotiation but marriage through mutual consent or by elopement are also given social sanction. They are not allowed to marry within their own *gotra*, i.e. father's or mother's *gotra*. Earlier, cross-cousin marriages were allowed but now it is not so. Levirate and sororate are socially recognized but not obligatory. In case a female divorcee decides

to remarry, her new husband has to return the bride price (*randh*) to her first husband. After marriage, residence is patriolcal. They follow the partilineal rule of inheritance and usually live in nuclear families, though sometimes they also live in extended families. Their women play an important role not only in the demostic sphere but also in economic activities. They also take an active part in rituals but at the same time, they are expected to observe some taboos in religious and ritual affairs. Of late, their women are represented in the statutory *gram pañcāyats.* Their marriage rituals are very simple and involve only a minium number of ceremonies. The priest (*guru*) who officiated on such occasions is from their own community.

Economically, the *Koli* are among the most backward lot. They are a landless community and many of them are agricultural labourers. They do not specialize in any particular job, but take up any job that can be secured. Nowadays, they have been given land with necessary facilities like seeds and manure. They get sapplings to plant apple orchards. According to the 1981 census, out of their total population, 44.64 per cent (56.28 per cent males and 32.44 per cent females) are workers.

Their traditional caste council oversees the observance of community norms and thier infringement is dealt with. They are Hindūs but they also have faith in traditional beliefs. The regional deities in their pantheon are held in great awe and respect. Clan deties are worshipped on all social occasions to ensure the well being of their family members.

As regards intercomunity relationships, the *Koli* still maintaing patron-client (*jajmānī*) relationships with the *Lohar* and *Barhai.* The Rajput and Kanet, who employ them as agricultural labourers, may give them a certain share of the harvest in lieu their services. They are also employed on a sharecropping (*ādhā-baṭai*) basis and also on a contract basis. Highly-ranked communities like the *Rajput* and *Brāhmaṇ* do not take cooked food or water from their hands. Ealrier, their entry into the upper caste villages was prohibited and they still do not enter temples and have their own crematorium.

The pace of development and its impact on the *Kolis* differs from one place to another depending on its proximity to urban centres and also on the availability of facilities. Literacy in interior areas is very poor because schools are located for away and educational facilities beyond the primary level do not exist. Their literacy

rate, according to the 1981 census, is 24.13 per cent, which is lower than the general literacy rate of the scheduled castes in the state (31.50 per cent). Their male and female literacy rates are 35.19 per cent and 12.54 per cent, respectively. On the positive side, economic measures taken by the government through the IRDP and employment guarntee schemes have yielded fruitful results. The economic aid doled out has been gainfully utilized by many of them. They have received manure and seeds to improve agricultural production. They have a lift irrigation system and have been encouraged to plant orchards.

In **Rajashtan,** the **Koli** are a traditional weaving community who are now engaged in agriculture and other jobs to earn their living. Both Koli and Kori are one and the same commmunity. Kabir is their great Teacher. They are also known as *Kori*, *Koria* and *Bunkar* in different parts of Rajasthan and Koria is a phonetic variation of *Kori.* They are concentrated in the Sawai Madhopur, Jaipur, Kota and Alwar districts. The Hindī language and the Devṅagarī script are used for both inter—and intra-group communication. In general, they are non-vegetarians and wheat, millet and maize are their staple cereals. The *Kabīrpanthi* amongst them are vegetarians.

The Koli in Rajasthan are divided into different subgroups such as *Mahawar, Sakwar, Sakyawar Rathda.* etc. However, *Mahawar* and Sakwar can intermarry. These subgroups are further divided into several exogamous clans like *Kathnalya*, Nahwan, Kajotya, Rajorya, Katariya, Morwal, Mahor, Chittoriya, Varma, Godariya, Dewatwal, Nepalpuriya, Bharwal, etc. Monogamy is the rule and marriages are usually arranged in childhood. The Koli usually opt for negotiated marriages. Marriage alliances are not allowed within the village, so they seek brides from outside the village. The marriage symbols for women are the vermilion mark and silver toe-rings. Dowry is usually given in kind. After marriage, residence is patrilocal. Divorce and remariage repermitted. Widow remarriage is permissible and junior levirate and junior sororate are allowed. They live in either extended or nuclear families. The rule of inheritance is male equigeniture. Their women look after household and agricultural work and also work as a labourers in road construction. The help of a midwife (*dai*) is taken during childbirth; *pachawa nahan* is celebrated on the fifth day after delivery and the mother is bathed in lukewarm water and is given a new dress

to wear. The birth of male child is celebrated. A Brāhmaṇ is consulted for naming the child. The tonsure (*laṭurī*) ceremony is generally performed at the age of five years. The marriage is solemnized by a Brāhmaṇ priest at the bride's house and the marriage feast is arranged by the bride's parents. After two to three years of marriage, the *goanā* ceremony is performed. In the case of death, children upo the age of five years are buried, whereas the others are cermate. On the third day, the mortal remains are collected and disposed off in the Ganges at Hardwar or in Puṣkar sarovar at Puskar. Death pollution is observed for eleven days in the case of females and twelve days for males.

Rajasthan Kolis and Koris inter-marry with the Kolis-Koris of U.P., Delhi, M.P.

Besides their traditional occupation of cloth-weaving, they are now engaged in cultivation and also work as agricltural and non-agricultural daily-wage labourers. Some are in service and a few are sharecroppers. According to the 1981 census, 29.58 per cent of their total population is returned as worker (47.86 per cent males and 9.25 per cent females). About 28.49 per cent of the wokers are engaged in manufacturing, processing, etc., which refers to their traditional occupation of weaving. However, almost an equal number of them, i.e. 29.92 per cent, are returned as cultivators, followed by 13.42 per cent as agricultural labourers. Of the rest, 10.10 per cent are engaged as construction workers and the remaining 18.07 per cent are engaged in other services.

The headman of their traditional community pañcāyat is known as *Chaudhary* and this position is hereditary, but the councils (*pañcs*) are elected by a voice vote. The Koli are Hindū by faith. They worship *mahādeoji*, Hanumān, Cmuṇḍī devī, Jharbaba, Jaipurwali devī, Jobner devī, Mansā devī and other gods and goddesses of the wider Hindū pantheon. They worship their ancestors and Lord Buddha and some have become followers of Kabīr. Holi, Dhulendi, Dussehra, *Diwalī* and *Saṅkrānti* are celebrated with great pomp. The *Kabīrpanthi* amongst them wear a *kaṇṭhīmālā* around their necks. Education is making them aware of Buddha and Kabir who were Koliyas.

In Delhi, the *Koli* are migrants from Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and very few from M.P. They are also known as Bunkar, Tantubai, Kori, Kapre or Kaperdiya and Mahor Koli. Regarding the etymology of the word Koli, people believe that it is

a corrupt form of *Kori*, since they weave coarse cloth(*kora*). They are concentrated in *Gaośalla*, *Nandnagrī*, *Dakṣiṇpurī*, Sāwan Pārk, Kotla, Mubarakpur, Madangiri, Āshram, Pahaḍganj Subzi Mandi and Sadar. They are bilingual. Those who have migrated from Rajasthan converse in the Indo-Āryan language, *Rajasthani* and *Marwari*, at home and in Hindī with others. Those who have migrated from Uttar Pradesh speak in *Khari Boli* or *Braj Bhāṣa*. They use the Devaṅāgarī script. They are usually non-vegetarians but those who follow *Kabīrpanth* and *Ārya Samāji* have become vegetarians, though they take eggs. Their staple food consists of wheat, but earlier barley, bajra, jowar and maize were their staple creals.

They are divided into nine endogamous subgroups, namely Mahor, Sankhwar, Aharwar, Banodiya, Bhadoriya, Parsutia, Kalayia, Shakyawar and Gaṅgapāriyā. Each subgroup is further divided into a number of clans such as *Pattanwāl*, *Jaggarwāl*, *Bindorma*, *Bainoriyā*, Chottriyā, *Mavasiā*, Mandoliya, Joonwāl, Goṭhwāl, Rariya, Banoliya, Basanwal, Rajoria, Pachoona etc. Some of them have started using titles like *Gupta*, *Verma* and *Bansal*. Subgroup endogamy and *gotra* exogamy are the rules of marriage. Child marriage had been replaced but adult marriage. Polygamy is allowed only in case the first wife is barren. Vermilion, glass bangles, *bindi* and toe-rings are the prescribed marriage symbols for women but now they are not being strictly observed. Bride price has long been abolished, but dowry has replaced it to some extent. Divorce is permitted but divorcees are looked down upon. The remarriage of the widowed and divorced is permissible. The remarriage ceremony for women constitutes the *karao* or *nata karna* ceremony. Now, the trend is to live in nuclear families but joint families are not uncommon. Property is divided equally among the sons and the eldest son succeds as the head of the family. Birth pollution is observed for nine or eleven days. The naming and tonsure (*muṇḍan*) ceremonies are observed for both male and female children. Marriages are performed in accordance with Hindū Vaidic rites at the bride's residence and the marriage feasts is hosted by the bride's parents. The dead are cremated and the mortal remains are disposed off in water. Death pollution is observed for thirteen days.

Kolis and Koris from other states sometimes meet in annual or special functions and express solidarity or oneness. They also show their highest regard for Buddha and Kabir who were of the same clon: as they believe.

Their traditional occupation is weaving. Besides weaving, some of them serve in government offices and in different cloth mills as weaving masters. A few of them are engaged in masonry work, some run shops and own small-scale industries and some others and vendors. According to the 1981 census, 30.51 per cent of their total population is returned as workers (50.39 per cent males and 5.86 per cent females). Of them, 2.82 per cent are engaged in the household indusry, and 47.01 per cent are in other-than-household industries which includes workers engaged in their traditional occupation of weaving and also in other industrial work. About 17.52 per cent of the workers are returned as construction workers and 10.52 per cent are in trade and commerce. The remaining 22.13 per cent of the workers are in other services.

Mostly followers of Kabir, Kolis of Delhi are socialy organised.

In **Haryana**, the **Koli** or Kori are cultivators artisans and labourers. Some are engaged in weaving and are also called *Camār-Julaha* in Gurgaon district. They have migrated from Oudh in Uttar Pradesh and are concentrated in Faridabad and Gurgaon districts. They speak in Haryani with their kin groups and in Haryanvi and Hindī with others. Devanāgrī is the script used. Their staple food is wheat bread and pulse (dal) but some of them also eat non-vegetarian food.

They have various clan (gotra) divisions like Nagli, Aṣṭamuni, Bad, Neveriya, Chhonkariya, Cauhan, Bhaṇwariya, Mainyya, Gujar, Jalandhari, Maidan, Rang, Dahiya, Tanwar, Nimauriya, etc. and the main function of these gotras is to regulate marriage alliances. All of them use Mahor as a title. They remember Buddha and Kabir as a result of education and social awakening. They are an endogamous community and observe clan (*gotra*) and village exogamy. In rare cases, a person can have two wives. Child marriage followed by *gaona* is still practised by some of them. Sororate and levirate are permitted. Bride price is looked down upon, but some of them still follow this practice. However, dowry is fast replacing bride price. Divorce and remarriage are permitted. A woman's remarriage is performed by the *kareva* ceremony. They live either in joint or nuclear families and the latter is on the increase. Women also do weaving and thus contribute to the family income. Marriage rituals are performed both at the bride's and the groom's residence. Birth pollution is observed for elven days. Well-worship (*kuan pūjan*), and the naming and tonsuring (*muṇḍan*) ceremonies

are observed. The dead are cremated but those who die in childhood are buried and death pollution is observed for thirteen days in case the deceased is young and seventeen days for others. In the case of an old person's death, the first death anniversay (*barsī*) is observed.

They earn their livelihood by engaging themselves in consruction works, masonry weaving of coarse cloth (*khādī*), agrcultural labour, service, etc.

Educated members are employed in government and private services, especially in plastic factories, foundries, police and defence services and in teaching. They are the harbingers of modern intercommunity linkages.

They favour children's education and their literacy rate, according to the 1981 census, is 26.48 per cent (40.40 per cent males and 9.27 per cent females). Modern family planning methods are favoured and some women opt of tubectomy. They favour and make use of both indigenous and modern medicare systems. Banking facilities for savings and for raising loans are being availed of.

In Punjab, the Koli or Kori are mostly Arya Samajist. Many are migrants from Uttar Pradesh, especially from Pratapgarh, Goṇḍa and Baharich districts. Out of their total population, 74.52 per cent are returned from urban areas. The Indo-Āryan languages, Hindī and Punjabi, are used for intra-and inter-group communication, respectively. The Gurmukhī and Devanāgarī scripts are used, depending upon the social situation. They are non-vegetarians and occasionally take mutton and eggs. Wheat is their staple cereal and pulses such as moong, masur and moth are also eatern. Groundnut and mustard oil are used for cooking. Their men take alcoholic drinks on ceremonial occasions.

All of them belong to the Kaśyap gotra. They have regard for Buddha and Kabir. Marriages are arranged only during adulthood. They practise the dowry system. Their women used vermilion, glass bangles and ear-rings as marriage symbols. Divorce and remarriage are permissible only after the community pañcāyat's sanction is secured. They mostly live in extended families, but of late there has been an increase in the formation of nuclear families.

Weaving, vegetable-selling, government service, unskilled labour, and agricultural and industrial labour are some of their occupations.

Their traditional community pañcāyat is known as the Kori or Koli Pañcāyat Sabhā. It's executive constitutes a pradhan, a secretary, a treasurer and the members. They are affiliated to the Uttar Pradesh *Saṁykt Kori Mahā Sabhā*. They have social connections with All India Koli Mahasabha. They attend Kabir functions. Local and petty issues are taken care of by the local pañcāyat. They are Hindūs and worship Hindū gods and goddesses. They have oral traditions such as folk-songs, folkore and folk-tales.

They exchange food with some communities. They have their own crematorium. Water sources are shared with other communities living in the area. There are no restrictions on visiting common religious places during festivals.

Formal education facilities and family welfare programmes are well received. Their literacy rate, according to the 1981 census, is 24.98 per cent. The male and female literacy rates are 29.18 per cent and 17.66 per cent, respectively. The facilities of primary health care are being utlilized. Coal, kereosene oil and fuel wood are the domesic fuels used. The facilities of immunization are also being availed of.

The **Kori** or **Koli** are also returned from **Chandigarh.** They call themselves Kabirpanthi : They have migrated from U.P., Delhi, and Bihar. In their daily life they follow Sadguru's teachings and very often Kabir Kirtans are organised.

Balahi or Balai

Balahi or *Balai* in Delhi is a *Kabīrpanthi* community. In the leadership of Krishna Swaroop, an influencial social worker and once a Minister in Delhi state, Balai community has made much social and economic progress. This community has migrated from Rajasthan and now found in several states according to census reports.

According to Russell and Hira Lal the *Balai* (*Balahi*) of Madhya Pradesh were 'a low functional caste of weavers and village watchmen who formed an occupational group; they were probably an offshoot of the larger Kori caste of weavers'. Their community name is derived from the Hindi term *bulahi*, meaning 'the one who calls' or 'a messenger'. They are also known as *Balai*.

The *Balahi* are divided into three endogamous subgroups, namely *Katiya*, *Ganorea* and *Nimare*. Each of these groups are further subdivided into different gotras, such as *Choure*, *Patankar*,

Dudhiya, *Mandlokar*, *Billare*, *Sangulle* and *Lockhare*; they use the surname *Balahi*. Marriages with memebrs of one's own, mother's or mother's maternal uncle's maternal uncle's *gotra* are not permitted. The age at marriage for girls and boys varies from twelve to fifteen and from fifteeen to eighteen years, respectively. Marriage are usually settled through negotiation.

Traditionally, they call themselves Kabirpanthis and are an occupational group of spinners and weavers. But now due to inadequate resources and poor marketability of their products they have resorted to agricultural labour and agriculture. After Independence, they have been alloted cultivable land by the government. Their hard work has considerably improved their economic condition in recent years. Transactions are made in cash. They work as agricultural labourers and also as sharecroppers. The statutory village pañcāyats now provide civic amenities. They profess Hinduism. Holi, Bhujaliyan and Dussehra are the festivals celebrated with the other communities in the village. They also celebrate Diwālī, Nāgapañcami, Jirotidevi, Rākhi, etc. They worship village deities, such as *Śitalāmātā* and *Bajraṅga* along with their caste deities, such as Bherondev, Dulhadev and Bhimdev. Hanumānji, Śaṅkarji and Rāmacandraji are also some of their deities. Gupteshwar of Bhehragarh is their sacred centre. They avail of the services of their own priests for marriages as well as for the propitiation of their gods and goddesses.

Educated Balais trace their origin to Sadguru Kabir Saheb and derive much inspiration. Delhi and Jaipur are two big centres of Kabirpanthi Balais now Kabirpanth has also raised their social status. Many Balais have become Kabirpanth monks and travel in states preaching the teaching of the great guru.

In 1956, Shree Ahimsa Pracharak Jan Saṅgh under Śrī Sameer Muniji Maharaj initiated the conversion of *Balai* in some parts of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan into Jainism. The converted *Balais* are referred to as Dharm Pal. This is an attempt to achieve better social status through coversion.

The **Balahi** of **Maharastra** migrated from Betul district in Madhya Pradesh a mere three generations ago. Also known as Mehra in Betual district, they have similarities with the *Koris* and *Mahars*. Apart from their mother tongue, they are also conversant in the Marāṭhi language. The *Devanāgarī* script is used for written communication. Though non-vegetarian, they abstain from eating port

and beef. *Balahi* men occassionally take alcoholic drinks. Their daily diet consists of *Jowar* roti and *tur dal.*

The Balahi are divided into seventeen exogamous clans including Koge, Belkar, baghmare, Jagdeo and Sonare. It is reported that some of the clan names represent goddesses, the tiger, trees, snakes, etc. Clan names are also used as surnames. Birth pollution is observed for five days and tonsure (*muṇḍan*) ceremony is performed. The name-giving ceremony (*barsa*) is observed by them either on the twelfth or fifteenth day after birth. Marriages are solemnized at the birde's residence. Burial is the prevalent practice for disposing off the dead and mortuary rites are performed on the thirteenth day. Ancestor worship is prevalent.

Traditionally, they are agricultural labourers. There are some who work as masons, carpenters and daily wage casual labourers. A few of them have acquire land or else are engaged in cultivation on a sharecropping basis.

The *Balai* of **Rajasthan** are variously called Meghwal or *Meghbanśī.* Educated Balais follow teaching of Kabir. While Mathur (1969) comments that they are occupationally ralated to the *Camār* and *Bhambi*, they consider themselves the caretakers of the cattle and agricultural implements of the Rānā Families and consequently, as being of a higher status. They are mostly returned from the rural areas, particularly in Udaipur district. Mewari, an Indo-Āryan language, is spoken at home and with other communities. Hindī is spoken with people not conversant with Mewarī. The Devanāgarī script it used.

The *Balai* of Rajasthan are divided into exogamous clans (*ataks*) like *Cauhān*, *Rathor*, *Babri*, *Solanki*, *Parmar* and *Kśatriya.* The clan's main functions are to indicate descent and regulate marriage alliances. Their surname is Balai. They are considered to belong to the *Śūdra varṇa.* Clan exogamy and community endogamy are maintained. Child marriages are arranged through negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. The giving of dowry (dahej) in cash and kind is prevalent. Divorce and remarriage are permitted. The extended families predominate over the nuclear ones. Ancestral property is equally shared by all the sons. The eldest son succeeds the father. Women do houshold work, collect fuel and contribute to family income as well. The *Balai* observe a pre-delievery ceremony called *japa* in the seventh month of pregnancy. The name giving and *sūraj pūja* are the important post-delivery ceremonies.

Marriage rituals start with the betrothal (*sagai-dastur*) ceremony. Marriages are solemnized at the bride's residence and the marriage feast is hosted by her parents. The marriage is consummated (*suhag rāt*) at the groom's house. The dead are cremated. Death pollution is observed for twelve days. The twelfty day death rites (*barwa-sradh*) are important mortuary rituals that are performed.

They profess Hinduism and worship *Durgāmātā*, Rāma Devji, Bheruji, Kalkāmātā as well as the village and regional deities. Some *Balai* have been admitted to the *Kabir and Dādū panthī* sect by one of the Kabirpanthi disciples but they are not allowed to go to temples. The sect shuns idolatry and believes in the unity of God and worship him as *Sat Rāma*, meaning true God. Sacred specialist employed from their own community perform ritual ceremonies and propitiate their deities. Holī, Navrātri, Rakṣā-bandhan and Diwālī are some of their important festivals. Folk-songs are sung by their women on marriage and festive occasions.

They exchange water and food with the *Bhil*, *Gamit*, *Salvi*, *Kalal* and *Lohar*. While they also accept food from the Brāhmaṇa, Rajaput, Jain, Dangi and other communities, the latter do not accept food from them. They share the water sources, cremation ground, school, *pañcāyat ghar*, etc. with the other communities.

The *Balai* in the Union Territory of Delhi are also known as *Balahi* and *Bulahi*. A caste of weavers and village messengers, they consider themselves to be descendents of Panwar Rajputs. Their original home is *Jaipur, Kota Bundi* and Bikaner. The Balai in Delhi are migranty from Rajasthan. The Rajasthani language is spoken at home and Hindī is spoken with other communities. For writing they use the Devanāgarī script. They are ocassional non-vegetarians who relish pork. There has been, in recent times, a tendency to change to vegatrianism. They consume all pulses, vegetables, fruits, milk and milk products. Alcholic drinks are occasionally taken.

Four subgroups, i.e. *Raj Balai*, *Balai*, *Meghwal* and *Sadh* or Kamad of Balai are reported in Delhi. Each of these subgroups is further divided into a number of *gotras* such as Therwal, Kharidya, Barkodiya, Dhayawana, Sivordiya, Chitroliya, Tanwar, Godhwal, Nidawat, Mehra, Luniwal, Lakhiwal, Ghasia, Mulodiya, Vanda Variya, Jeweriya, Mushiawat, Sirohiwal, Kgkara, Jindol, Malinda, etc., Verma is their surname and sometimes clan names are used as surnames. The *gotra* divisions regulate marriage alliances. They

place themselves in the *Kṣatriya varṇa* whereas other communities place them in the *Śūdra varṇa*. Community endogamy and clan exogamy are followed. Child marriages have now been replaced by adult marriages. Marriages are negotiated. Marriages are solemnized at the bride's residence and the marriage feast is given by the bride's parents. Nuptial ceremonies are performed at the groom's residence. They cremate their dead and immerse the mortal remains in the river. Death pollution is observed for thirteen days. They observe an annual ancestral worshipd (śrādh) during the months of September-October (Knagat). As there is much awakening among Balais of Delhi, they follow simple Kabirpanthi Traditions in every day social life.

In Delhi they are engaged in several. occupations, work in mills and factories, shops, offices. Wearing is almost a dead occupation now because of heavy competition from organised mill sector. Textile mills in Delhi were employing Balais in large numbers, but these mills have closed down. A registered society known as *Balai Jāti Sudhār Saṅgh* functions as the modern community association and its efforts are to work for the welfare and upliftment of its members. They are Hindū by faith Kabirpanthi. Ordinary *Balai* have a special reverence for Baba Rāmaji, Bhainro, Jirn mātā and Mahamai. Teez and Gangawe are the festivals celebrated with great enthusiasm. A few of them are now Ārya Samajıs and Rādhā Soamis. Folk-songs are sung both by males and females. Their women participate in dance.

Some Balai migrated from Rajasthan have settled down in Mathura and Agra. The are mostly masons and carpentars. Some are engaged in shoe-business. They follow Kabirpanthi traditions specially the educated one.

Julaha

For Kori-Koli weavers, *Kabīrpanthis* Julaha is an occupational title. But for William Crooke Julaha is a Muhammadan Caste, which he writes in his Tribes and Castes of the North Western Province and Oudh (1896). He suggests it had been supposed that they represent some menial Hindū weaving caste who were converted wholesale to Islam. This was very much in vogne in Kabir's time. On the other hand, it is possible that they may have grown up among the Muhammadan body. But there seems good reason to believe that they are an occupational caste recruited from diverse

sources. Thus as Mr. Ibbetson remakrs "we find Koli Julahas, Chamār Julahas, Mochī Julahas, Ramdasi Julahas, and so forth: and it is probable that after a few generations these men will drop the prefix which denotes their low origin and become Julahas pure and simple."

2. The Parsotiya Julaha of Rohilkhaṇḍa is a *Hindū* and apperently only a variety of *Kori*. Julahas at the last Census recorded themselves in 244 sections of the usual type. These seem to have no influence on marriage. Many of these suggest a connection with other tribes and sects, such as Bais, Banya, Bargujar, Bhaṅgi, Bhāṭa, Bisen, Chamār, Chauhān, Gaur, Koli, Rajput, Tamoli, Teli, Tomar. Others represent local settlements are Bahraichiya, Chaurasiya, Faizabadi, Gaṅgāparī, Haidarabadi, Hasanpuri, Kanaujiya, Kanhpuriya, Kahairabadi, Mathuriya, Mirzapuri, Multani, Purabiya, Sarwariya, Shahabadi and Uttaraha. Other again are of the regular Muhammadan types: *Madari, Muhammadi*, Momin *Mughal, Patan*, Shaikh, Sadiqi and Sunni. But this is all absurd and not a very seientific and reliable classification.

3. The world Julaha is of Perisan origin (*jalah, juláh, juláha*, a weaver, Jula, Julla, a ball of thread)."

It is quite clear, some *Kori* weavers embraced Islam. But at the same time many returned to the Hindū fold after the end of the Muslim-Mughal power. There are both Hindū and Muslim Julahas engaged in wearing. Muslim Julahas trace their origin among *Kori-Koli* weavers. However a large number of Momin Ansars do exist in northern Indian who have opted various professions.

Kabīra himself has declared as Julaha at several places in his poetry, therefore Hindū Julaha community in several states call themselves as *Kabīra panthis*. In other words Julaha is also synonym to *Kabīra panthi* and *Kori*. Kabīra calls himself as *Kori* also. In medival period *Kori* and *Kolis* called themselves as Julaha due to Muslim contact and their growing cultural and social influence.

Certainly "**JULAHA** is a community of weavers. The Julaha are found in Maṇḍi, Bilaspur, Kangra, Hamirpur and Simla districts of **Himachal Pradesh** and their distribution is sporadic in other districts. They are also found in the Union Territories of Delhi and Candigarh. The etymology of the word *Julaha* is from the Persian word Julaha, meaning a ball of thread (Rose, 1919). But people commonly associated the world Julaha with jala or jali (network of thread). A section of them call themselves *Kabīra Panthi* or *Kabīra Vaṅśi* after the famous *Bhakti* poet-saint, Kabīra, brought up in

a Julaha family. They are notified as Julha, Julahe, *Kabīra Panthi* and Koer in Himachal Pradesh. They trace their origin from Kabir Saheb, specially the educated among them. They are mainly distributed in rural areas. They speak different regional languages like Kāṅgḍī and Chambiali which belong to the Indo-Āryan family of languages and use the Devanāgarī script. They are generally non-vegetarians and their staple cereals are maize, wheat and rice. They consume country liquor, but the followers of the Rādhā Swāmī sect abstain from consuming it.

According to the 1981 census notification, the two sections among them are Julaha *Kabīra Panthi* and Julaha Koer. They are divided into different *gotras* such as *Tiamlu*, Janeogal Bhatti, Jubiani, Gautam, Dhiane, Ralot, Bhoor, Dod Jubliani, Chathwaru, etc. The Julaha are grouped under the *Śūdras* in the *varṇa* order and are considered to have a higher status than the Camār and Dumna in the local social hierarchy. They practise *gotra* and village exogamy and community endogamy. Monogamy is the norm. The marriageable age for the boys and girls is around twenty and sixteen years, respectively. Dowry payment has replaced the customary bride price. Vermilion (sindur), glass bangles, nose-ring and nose-stud are marriage symobls for women.

Their traditional occupation of weaving is now being pursued by only a few. Most of them seek jobs on a daily-wage basis or as regular labour for laying roads and for forest work, or engage as agricultural labourers or plough land on a contract basis. Some have procured subsidized thrashing machines and they rent them out during the harvesting season. They are also engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, masonry, tailoring, petty business, etc. Some people are employed in government offices as peons, chowkidars, clerks, teachers, junior engineers, electricians, defence personnel, etc.

Their social disputes are generally settled by the elderly persons (*sayanas*) of the community or of the village. Otherwise, the statutory grāma pañcāyat intervenes for a settlement. Some disputes are also settled by making the parties in dispute swear in the name of their deities. They are Hindūs and worship the deities of the Hindū pantheon. Some are followers of the Rādhāswāmī sect. Ton Bharari, Guga, Gugri, Doet Sidh, Baba Balak Nāth and Asapoori are propitiated as clan and village deities. Others, like Nar singh, Lakhdata, Naina Devi, Vaiṣṇava Devi, Santhoshi Mata and

Jawalāmukhī are propitiated as regional deities. They perform comedies (*swāṅg*) on festive occasions. Some of their community members know sorcery and witchcraft.

The intercommunity commensal norms vary. Some arrange *succi rasoi* (cooked by the Brāhmaṇa/Rajput/other clean castes), whereas others give *sukka* or *sidha* food to the upper caste guests. A Camār accepts food and water from a Julaha but the latter does not. The Julaha and other low caste people are served meals at the end or they sit in separate rows in upper caste social gatherings.

Development programmes have provided them with subsidy for agriculture and animal husbandry. Some of them have been allotted land for cultivation.

The Julaha living in the Union Territory of Delhi are said to have migrated from Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and even from Punjab. They have two sections, i.e. the Julaha and the *Kabīrpanthi*. As it is an migrant community their mother tongue depends upon the place of their migration, namely Rajasthani, Hindī or Punjabi. Most of them use the *Devanāgarī* script. Generally Hindī is used for inter-group communication. They have a number of exogamous *gotras* such as Dhaiya, *Chopra*, *Cauhān*, *Ranga*, *Mehra*, *Lomorodh*, *Dasodia*, *Dochania* and *Sherāwat*. They observe birth popullation for nine or eleven days. On completion of the pollution period, the chathi ceremony is performed and *Bemata* is propitiated. Their marriage is solemnized at the bride's residence. The dead are cremated and every year during *Kanagat* (October-November) and at the time of marriage and birth, ancestors are worshipped. Though their traditional occupation is weaving, most of them have taken up business and trade, and some of them have set up small-scale industries. many of them are engaged as skilled or unskilled labourers. They are Hindūs by faith. Some of them revere Kabīra and some are followers of the *Ārya Samāj* and *Rādhā Swāmī* sects. A few of them have embraced Sikhism but continue to observe pre-conversion practices. The Julaha do not exchange food with the Cuhḍā, Camār, Dhanak, *Balai*, *Raiger*, *Berwa*, *Muslim* and the like. Brāhmaṇs accept only *sidha* food from them. Their attitude towards education, family planning, modern medicare and traditional medicare is favourable.

The **Julaha** and Julaha Kabirpanthis are also found in the Union Territory of **Chandigarh**. We have Koli Julaha, Camār Julaha, Mochi Julaha, Rāmadāsī Julaha and so forth; and it is probable

that after a few generations these men may drop the prefix which denotes their low origin and become Julaha pure and simple. They speak Punjabi and use the Gurumukhi script both among themselves and also with other local communities. Some of their exogamous *gotras* and Bagri, Babdya, Saral, Kalair, etc. They give dowry in kind. Marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence according to the Sikh tradition of four *lavan pheras* called *anand kāraj*. They cremate the dead and on the third day, the mortal remains (*phul chuṅga*) are collected for immersion in the river. On the tenth day *dasai* is observed. After twenty days the recitation of *Guru Grantha Sāhib* (*Sādhāraṇa path*) is performed and there is a feast. They are observe ancestor worship (*sradh*). Education Julaha Kabirpanthis trace their origin to Kabir Saheb, as their Great Guru. In Nanak math (Sikh panth) Kabir enjoys a respectable place, they believe.

Weaving is their traditional occupation. They are also engaged in business, government or private services.

They follow Sikhism. Their sacred specialist, known as bhaijee, is chosen from other communities who perform various life-cycle rituals, propitiate their gods and impart religious teaching. Weaving and embroidery on cloth are their crafts. Men and women sing folk-songs on marriages and take part in folk-dances called *bhāṅgḍā* and *giddha*. They accept and exchange food with all the communities except the Camār and *Balamiki*. They have benefited from various developmental programmes, formal education, health and medicare, family welfare, media and communication, electricity, etc.

The Julaha in Haryana are also referred to as *Bunkar*, *Bunia*, *Paoli*, *Koli*, *Kori*, *Patua*, *Ganda*, *Panka*, *Devanga*, *Togata*, *Jugi Julaha* and *Dhanak Julaha*. The Chamār Julaha are followers of Ravi Dās and are found in Gurgoan, Faridabad, Mahandergath and Sonepat districts. The Dhanak Julaha claim to be descendent of Kabīra and are distributed in Ambala, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Jind, Rohtak, Hissar, Bhiwani, etc. They are notified as *Kabīrpanthi*, Julaha in Haryana. Among themselves they speak in Haryani. With outsiders they speak in Hindī and Haryanvi and they use the Devanāgarī script. Their staple food consists of wheat, maize, rice, *bajra* and *barley*. They are vegetarians but eat eggs, both fertilized and non-fertilized. Men consume alchoholic drinks purchased from the market. They smoke *beedis*, cigarettes and the *hookah*.

Educated class of Kabirpanthi Julahas in Haryana get inspiration from Kabir Saheb.

Their subgroups are further divided into a number of clans (*gotra*) like *Cauhān*, *Bhatti*, *Rathi* (Rethi), *Sahrawat*, *Swain*, *Burgujar*, *Kararai*, *Kataria*, *Dahiya*, *Punia*, *Merwal Morwal*, *Khanagwal*, *Malik*, *Soroha*, *Saini*, *Mehra*, *Deswal*, *Bahoria*, *Bargujar*, *Dhaniya*, *Bajwari*, *Berwal*, *Bhangar*, *Barah*, *Rang*, *Toor*, *Paria*, *Samajar*, *Senhmar*, *Mati*, *Goru Jangli*, etc. They are aware of the *varṇa* system and recognize themselves and Śūdras. They maintain community edogamy and village and *gortra* exogamy. Hypergamy, junior levirate and junior sororate are practised. Marriages are arranged through negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. Vermilion and nose-ring are symbols of a married woman. After marriage they follow patriolocal residence. The kanyādān system exists. Dowry is paid in cash and kind. Divorce is permitted on grounds of impotency and in such cases, compensation is given to the wife's parents. Widows, widowers and female divorcees can remarry. Liberalization of rules for remarriage is reported. Nuclear families dominates over other types of amilies. They follow the male equigeniture rule of inheritance and succession goes to the eldest son. Their women have a role in animal husbandry, the collection of fuel and potable water, in social functions and rituals. Their women, an addition to their daily chores, also have a role in economic activities and contribute to the family income, but they do not have decision-making powers. Pre-and post-natal restrictions on the mother and post-delievery observance of pollution are common. The naming ceremony is observed. The tonsure (mundan) ceremony is observed for male children. Marriage rituals are performed at the birde's residence or at a public place. The feast is hosted by both the parties. The dead are cremated and the mortal remains are disposed off in water. Ancestor worship is observed.

They are a landless community and subsist on business, trade, weaving, animal husbandry etc. Some of them are skilled labourers. Their traditional occupation is weaving and dyeing. Child labour exists. There is a rise of daily-wage labourers and industrial labourers. The traditional caste pañcāyat and the statutary pañcāyat exist. The village pañcāyat and caste pañcāyat settle cases of rape, elopement, theft and the like, and impose punitive cash fines. As regards crafts, they are master weavers and dyers. Their community-specific oral tradition includes folkolore and folk-tales. Their women sing folk-

songs.

They accept water, and *kacca* and *pucca* food from most of the castes but avoid the scavenging castes. They exchange food (*kacca* or *pucca*) with communities of equivalent status.

They favour formal education. Boys and girls generally study up to the secondary level. Boys drop out because they have to earn and support their family while girls drop out due to economic and social reasons.

The **Julaha** Kabirpanth followers are notified as a scheduled caste in **Jammu and Kashmir** and their population.

Kabirpanthi

As it is generally known followers of Kabīr are Kabīrpanthis. In the beginning it was just like a sect but gradually the weaving communities declared themselves as Kabīrpanthi instead of Kori, Koli or Julaha. They all follow the teachings of Kabīr and worship him as a fordmaker. In due course of time many low caste people declared themselves as followers of the great teacher Kabīr and naturally they began to call themselves as Kabīrpanthis. They were mostly non-weaving communities.

Many higher castes of Punjab, Gujrat, Rajasthan call themselves followers of Kabir. They feel proud to call themselves Kabirpanthis.

Kabīrpanth also became a symbol of revolt against ritualism and caste system. Therefore many progressive people opted Kabirian teachings.

According to William Crooke : "Kabīrpanthi is a Hindu sect who are followers of the Saint Kabīra. His name is from an Arabic root meaning 'great'. The history of the saint is very uncertain. He is believed to have been born at Benares and adopted by a weaver. By one account he was miraculously conceived by the virgin widow of a Brāhman, and he lived partly at Benares and partly at Maghar, in the Basti District, in the reign of Sikandar Shāh Lodi, between 1488 and 1512 A.D. Owing to his connection with the weaver caste, many Julāhas are fond of calling themselves Kabīra Bansi, or Kabīrpanthi, without much reference to the special doctrines associated with the name of Kabīra. Writing of the Panjāb, Mr. Maclagan remarks that the connection between weaving and religion is as interesting as that between cobbling and irreligion in England. "There are some Musalmān tribes (the Khokhars,

Chughattas and Chauhāns, for instance) who are found in many parts of the Province performing indifferently the functions of the weaver and the Mulla." Kabīr is said to have been a disciple of Rāmanand, and from one point of view the Kabīrpanthis are merely Rāmanandis who refuse to worship idols. Kabīr, as the legend of his death shows, was a product of both Hindū and Muhammadans disputed as to the disposal of his body. But while they were contending the saint himself appeared and told them to look under the seet which convered his corpse, and then immediately disappeared. When they raised the sheet they found only a heap of flowers. Of these the Hindus took half and burned them at Benares, while the Muhammadans buried the remainder at Maghar, where a cenotaph was raised over them, and the saint is worshipped in both places by the followers of the rival creeds.

2. On the principles of the sect Professor Wilson wrties:— "The Kabīrpanthis, in consequence of their master having been a reputed disciple of Rāmanand and of their paying more respect to Viṣṇu than the other members of the Hindū triad, are always included among the Vaiṣnava sects and maintain, with most of them, the Rāmāwats especially, a friendly intercourse and political alliance. It is no part of their faith, however, to worship any Hindu deity, or to observe any of the rites or ceremonials of the Hindus, whether orthodox or schismatical. Such of their members as are living in the world conform outwardly to all the usages of their tribes and caste, and some of them pretend even to worship the usual divinities, though this is considered as going further than is justifiable. Those, however, who have abandoned the fetters of society abstain from all the ordinary practices, and address their homage chiefly in chanting hymns exclusively to the invisible Kabīr. They use no *mantra* or fixed form of salutation, they have no peculiar mode of dress, and some of them go nearly naked, without objecting, however, to clothe themselves when clothing is considered decent or respectful. The Mahants wear a small skull cap; the frontal marks, if worn, are usually those of the Vaiṣnava sects, or they make a streak with sandal or Gopichandan along the ridge of the nose; a necklace and rosary of Tulasi are also worn by them, but all these outward signs are considered of no importance, and the inward man is the only essential point to be attended to."

3. It is perhaps more by his writings than by his actual teaching that the chief influence of Kabīra has been gained. His doctrines

and precepts are embodied in the Sukh-nidhān and the Adi-granth of the Sikhs. Next to the Rāmāyan of Tulsi Dās there is perhaps no body of literature which is so popular among Hindus of Northern India as the Bījak of Kabīr, and his verses are ever on the lips of both Hindus and Musalmān. Westerns are also attracted to his faith.

4. The sect is open to both Hindus and Musalmāns, and perhaps in consequence of this it is not a favourite with men of high caste. Most of its adherents, in these Provinces at least, are drawn from the inferior castes, as the lower Banyas, Sunārs, Lohārs, Koiris, Koris, Kāchhis, Kumhārs, Barhais, Chamārs, and Julāhas. Some weavers (Tantuvai) call themselves only Kabirpanthis Sadhs (pure). Among the weaving castes it is, as has been said already, extremely popular. There is no regular formula of initiation (*mantra*). The introduction of a neophyte is performed in this way. A piece of ground in the monastery or in the house of the candidate is carefully cleaned and lastered. In this is placed a pitcher full of water, in the mouth of which are fixed some mango twigs (*palāv*); on the pitcher a lamp is lighted with ghi and an offering is made consisting of sandal, holy rice (*achchat*), and flowers and incense is burned. A garland of flowers is placed round the neck of the pitcher and the core of a cocoa-nut with some *batāsha* sweetmeats if offered. Some camphor is burnt and the neophyte sits in the holy square before the Guru, who makes him say the words:—

Satya purusha ko swāns se hriday men japo.

"Repeat the name of the true being within you with breath." The disciple then with his joined hands thrice makes obeisance to the Guru and utters thrice the words, *Bandagi Sāhib!* "My service to the Master." This is the common form, but the ritual with the more learned Mahants is of an elaborate type. After this the Guru teaches the disciple the Gāyatri or Morning Prayer and the Sandhya sumiran or evening prayer. This Gāyatri is not the usual. Hindu form—Tat savitar varenyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiya yo nah prachodayāt.—"Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the Divine Vivifying Sun; may he enlighten our understandings." The Kabīrpanthi Gāyatri is a song (*bāni*) composed by Kabīr himself and runs as follows :—

Kabīr din duni darbesha dwār salāmat lekha;
Tum rund mund men pira;

Tum phāka, phakkar phakira;
Tum chalo kunn ki chāl;
Tum ramo kaun ki nāl;
Tum sarbangi sahjer men, tum ko wār na pār.
Sakal nirantar tum ramo tumhāré gahar ganbhīr.
Khāli khalak nujh māhīn yon Guru kahain Kabīra.
Satya nām ki ārti nirmal bhaya sharīr.
Dharm Dāsa loké chalé guru bahiyān milé Kabīr.

"The faith of Kabīr is double mendicaney; only bowing to the door of God is taken into account. It is thou who feelest pain in the headless body. It is thou who livest in the starving mendicant. In whose footsteps cant thou walk? In whose stream cant thou flow? Thou art of all forms and hast neither beginning nor end. Thou art the beginning and thou art the end. Thou art the bank of all the rivers (religious sects). Thou pervadest the entire universe. Thou art deepest of all. Saith Kabīr "Without me (God) the Universe is empty; it is I that fill the Universe. If you light the sacred lamp of truth your body will be free from darkness. Dharm Dās (the slave of virture) holds the hand of his religious guide Kabīra and ascends to heaven."

6. The Sandhya Sumiran or Evening Prayer is as follows:—

Sānjh bhae, din athāe, chakai dīna roé.
Chal chakwa ohi deswān jahān diwas rain nahīn hoé.
Rain ki bichhuri chakai aya mili prabhāt.
Jo jan bichhuri nām ke pāwai diwas nahīn rāt.
Binwat honkar jori ke, sunu guru kripā nidhān.
Daya gharībi bandagi samāta shīl karār.
Eté gahané bhakta ke adi bhakti sringār.
Kewal nām kewal guru bāla pīr Kabīra.

"Evening has come and the sun has set. Then cries the Brāhmani duck. 'O mate of mine! Let us seek that land where there is no night nor day.' When the duck parts from her mate at night she meets him again at dawn; but he who parts with the True Name never finds it again either by night nor day. Generosity, humility, worship, the universal brotherhood of mankind, uniform observance of law, and morals—these are the ornaments of a devotee, and his decoration is the love of God. The True Name is the only religious guide, and his greates prophet is Kabīr."

7. Besides these, the Guru teaches the disciple a number of hymns which he commits to memory, and signs morning and evening. The Guru visits his disciples once a year in the cold weather, and he and other mendicants of the sect are entertained by him for a couple of days. Every day the disciple washes the big toe of his Guru and drinks the water (*charanamrita*). When the Guru is leaving the disciple does obeisance, and makes him a present of money, clothes, vessels, etc., and salutes him with the words *Bandagi Sāhib*, thrice. As long as the Guru stays in his house the disciple joins the mendicants in singing songs morning and evening. When the disciple visits his Guru he is entertained by him, but gives him a present when he leaves. The Guru's influence over his disciple is altogether exercised in the interests of morality, and should he offend he is very sternly reprimanded by the Guru. One of the main principles of the sect is to submit everything in life to control of the Guru; at the same time Kabīr himself did not exact unquestioning obedience from his disciples, and encouraged them to investigate for themselves the truth of his advice and injunctions.

Earlier because of ignorance and lack of education it is infortunate that Kori-Koli and Hindu Julaha of Uttar Pradesh, where Kabīr was born and spread his teachings hesitated in calling themselves as Kabīrpanthis. However, when sanskritisation and social transformation began during India's freedom movement as well as with the end of the Colonial rule weaving communities came forward to declare themselves as Kabīrpanthis. They include Kori (Koli), Balai, Julaha, Dhanuk etc.

European writers and scholars have created confusion regarding the caste of Kabīr. But Kabīrpanthis are professionally weavers, and certain non-weaving castes also call themselves Kabīrpanthis. Now they follow the sect of Kabīr, his teachings who stood against caste system. and Brāmanism. Throughout Northern India specially in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana and Delhi, UP and Bihar. Kabīrpanthis however have kept their identity as a caste of weavers. They are included in the list of Scheduled Castes in their respective states. Their social, cultural and educational status is very low because of widespread poverty due to the downfall of the weaving profession during Colonial rule and even after independence, as well due to industrialization. It is also a fact that Chamārs also in several states declared themselves Kabīrpanthis as it was a more sanskritized and refined caste.

According to K.S. Singh : "...By profession the Kabīrpanthis are weavers in Punjab. The Julaha are grouped with the Kabīrpanthis in the notification of the Scheduled Castes in Punjab. The Kabīrpanthi, Julaha have derived their name from Bhagat Kabīr of Banares who was a Julaha by profession. The Hindū Julaha follow his teachings. Punjabi and the Gurmukhi script are used for both inter-and intra-group communication. Radha Swāmī Sect has also attracted the Kabirpanthi Julahas.

There are both Hindūs and Sikhs among them. The Sikhs worship Guru Granth Sahib and the Hindūs visit temples to offer their prayers. The sacred specialists are chosen from other communities. Weaving is the craft with which they are traditionally associated. However Julahas who are either Sikh or Kabirpanthi Hindu intermarry and have good relations being of the same stock.

They are allowed to dine with the Ramdasi Sikhs. They accept and exchange food from different communities.

In 1908, a weekly meeting of the Wachno Wali Arya Samaj performed a shuddhi ceremony for the untouchable Kabīrpanthis. Kabīr's teachings enjoin the sect's followers to abjure polytheism and idol worship. That practice continued for several years and at several places. After partitions Kabirpanthis population is increasing and people are much awakened.

A community in the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir, the Kabir Panthi are also known as Bhagats. This name was adopted by them during the Bhakti period of medieval times because of their adherence to the values of Bhagat Kabīr. The Bhagat mostly inhabit the fertile tracts of Jammu, Akhnur, Ranbirsinghpura and Samba-Kathura tehsil. They are also scattered all over the Kandi plateau and higher mountain regions of Bhagdarwa and Kishtwar. Two different theories are narrated about their origin—one states that they have descended from the Kṣatriyas, as their ancestor disguised himself as a weaver in order to escape persecution at the hands of Parsurama who vowed to wipe out the Kśatriya race, and the second one relates that their ancestor, a learned Brāhman, had to remove the corpse of a cow from his home as he could not avail of the services of a menial owing to his poverty, and so he was excommunicated. Though his offspring continued to follow the Bramanical traditions for sometime, they adopted weaving under the influence of Kabīr. They claim to be the original inhabitants

and landowners of Jammu region but were dethroned by the ruling dynasties who invaded the land and subjugated them. Even today, there are some landlords among them. The Dogri language is spoken by them and many of them are conversant with Hindi. The Devanāgarī script is used. They are non-vegetarians, and wheat and rice are their staple cereals. The Bhagat have exogamous gots (gotras) similar to those of the Brāhmaṇ and Thakur-Rajput, such as Bhardwaj, Kashyap, Magotra, Sangotra, Kushal, Bhadu, etc.

They serve as farm labourers, tillers and weavers. Their women serve as stable cleaners and remove cowdung and dirt from the houses of zamindars. Their traditional occupation was cotton-weaving. They have become daily-wage earners and work in factories, government construction work and in other undertakings. Some of them own small pieces of agricultural land. A few are teachers, transporters, contractors, politicians and even government officers. They are Hindus. They have almost dispensed with the services of Brahmans. They have been influenced by the teachings of the Bhakti movement and believe in social equality. The Bhagat worship all gods of Vedic and Puranic origin and are mostly Sanatanists, though they contributed to the reformist movement of the Arya Samaj. They have intercomunity linkages at various levels except in matters of exchange of food and water and matrital relations. The Bhagat maintain commensal relations with other Hindū groups. Putative kinship could be contracted irrespective of caste or creed. Their participation in political activities is reported at the local, regional and national levels. They are represented in various democratic bodies. Their attitude towards developmental plans is favourable. They respond positively to family welfare programmes.

Jogi

Jogi (or Jugi, Yogi) word reminds us to the days of Patanjali. In fact, learned sage 'Patanjali was the author of Yoga-Sutra. It is believed he codified the ideas of meditation current in the Hindū school of thought based upon the Sankhya philosophy. This condification was in verse which could be memorised and handed down intact untill it took the written form. Date of Patanjali's origin is 600 A.D. or later, but the thought exists in the earliest Upanishads and affected Buddhist practices. Therefore he is not an original discoverer of Yoga but a compilar of the philosophy in the set

of Sutras. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan 'Hiranyagarbha' is the founder of the yoga system.

Jacobi thinks Yoga system was in existence as early as 300 B.C. Bhoja in his commentary on Yoga-Sutra suggests that Patanjali wrote works on grammer (speech), Yoga (mind) and medicine (body).

Yogi or Jogi is undoubtedly an ancient community which is found all over India, specially in northern belt.

According to William Crooke : **"Jogi**—(sanskrit Yoga, 'union') is a "term properly applied to the followers of the Yoga, or Patanjala School of Philosophy, which, among other tenets, maintained the practicability, even in life, of acquiring entire command over elementary matter by means of certain ascetic practices. The practices consist chiefly of long continued suppressions of respiration; inhaling and exhaling the breath in a peculiar manner; of sitting in eighty-four different attitudes; of fixing the eyes on the top of the nose; and endeavouring, by force of mental abstraction, to effect a union between the portion of vital spirit residing in the body and that which pervades all Nature, and is identical with Śiva considered as the Supreme Being and source and essence of all Creation."

The last census divided the Jogis into the two main classes of Aughar and Gorakhpanthi. The real founder of the sect is said to have been Yogi Gorakhnāth about whom so many wonderful tales are told, but whose personality and history are for the most part shrouded in legend and mystery. He is said to have had twelve disciples whose names are very uncertain, and there are several lists of them. One list is—Sat Nāth, Dharm Nāth, Kāya Nāth, Ādh Nāth, Mast Nāth, Abhapanthi, Kalepa, Dhajpanthi, Handibirang, Ramké, Lachhmanké, Darya Nāth. According to another—Aipanthé, Ramké, Bharthari or Brahtahari Sat Nāth, Kanibaki (disciples of Jālandhar Nāth; of this branch are the Sapelas), Kapāl Muni, Lachhman Natesar, Ratan Nāth, Santokh Nāth, Dhajpanthi (followers of Hanumān), Man Nāth (followers of Rāja Rasālu). A third list gives—Sant Nāth, Rāma Nāth, Abbang Nāth, Bharang Nāth, Dhar Nāth, Gangāi Nāth, Dhaja Nātha, Jālandhar Nāth, Darpa Nāth, Kanak Nāth, Nīm Nāth, and Nāg Nāth. Different writers have given different names of his followers. The best known sub-divisions are the Aughar and the Kanphatas, of whom a separate account has been given. Mr. Maclagan suggests that "thee are many things which point to a non-Hindū origion for the Jogis and Sannyāsis. The Hindū wears a scalp-lock, carries the sacred thread, burns his dead, and

generally speaking, abstains from flesh and wine. The Jogis too are remarkabley prevalent in the Peshāwar and Kābul direction, where Buddhism was once so strong. And the names of their twelve Nāths bear some resemblance with those of the Jaina Tīrthankaras. There are legends too which connect Gorakh Nāth in a special way with Nepāl, and the Panth of Jālandhar Nāth is often termed Pānāth from the fact that its members in place of Nāth adopt after their names the termination *Pā*, which is the Tibetan epithet for our familiar *wāla*."

Besides the respectable members of the sect who are contemplative ascetics., there are others who do not bear such a reputable character. Among these the Bhartari and Nandiya Jogis are Hindus, and the Bhaddar very often Musalmāns. They wear a beard and along sort of coat dyed with ochre which is called *gudri*. On the shoulders they carry an alms wallet (*jholi*) dyed in ochre, and a turban of the same colour. The Bhartari Jogis carry about with them a sort of fiddle (*sārangi*) and a stick called *bairāga*. They play on the fiddle and sing songs in honour of Bhartrihari, who is said to have been the brother of Rāja Vikramaditya. His shrine is in the Chunār Fort, and he passes part of the day there and the rest in Banares. They wear round their necks a necklace (*māla*) of *rudrāksha* beads. The Bhaddari Jogis dress in very much the same way, but do not carry a fiddle. They tell fortunes by means of palmistry and control on ghosts and demons.

The Nandiya Jogis wear the same dress, but do not carry a fiddle. They lead about with them a deformed ox, an animal with five legs, or some other malformation. He is decorated with ochre coloured rags and cowry shells. They call him Nandi or the vehicle of Mahādeva, and receive gifts of grain from pious Hindūs, half of which they put into their wallet, and give the other half to the animal. They usually carry on a more profitable business than other kinds of beggars. The ox is trained to give a blessing to the benevolent by shaking its head and raising its leg when its master receives a gift. Some of the Jogis of this class carry about with them a brush which they wave over the heads of children afflicted with the Evil Eye. These people are hereditary beggars, and keep houses and families. The boys are initated into the order at the time when the ceremonial shaving (*mūndan*) is carried out. Then the Guru makes over a ragged garment (*gudri*) to the neophyte, with a wallet and fiddle, the implements of his trade. The Guru

often receives considerable sums of money for initiating a disciple. The mendicants of the order assemble at the time of initiation, and unless the candidate is a hereditary member of the order, his friends have to give seven dinners to the breathren. They beg from both Hindūs and Musalmāns, but naturally Hinduūs are their chief supporters. They do not take cooked food as alms, not because they are particular in matters of eating, because they can take *kachchi* from a Chamār or any caste not inferior to his. The alms they take are money or uncooked grain, and they will also take rags and old clothes. The Bhartari Jogis sing songs in honour of Bhartrihari, Rāja Gopi chand, and Mahādeva. They also sing songs in honour of Daya Rāma (*karkha*). The Bhaddari or Nandi Jogis hardly ever sing; or if they do sing, it is songs in honour of Mahādeva. To the west of the province they sing songs to Zāhir Pir, or the love ballads of Hīra and Rānjha, or the adventures of Amar Singh Rāthaur. They also work as tailors and silk-spinners, and have several *gotras* with Rāiput names, such as Chauhān, Kachhwāha, Gahlot, etc. These all eat and intermarry with each other execpt in their own gotra.

Many of these Jogis have a very indifferent reputation. They wander about to make themselves acquainted with the history and antecedents of any rich family which may have lost a near or important relative, and, personating the absentee, readily obtain access to the family, which results in a general plunder of the premises and the disappearance of the swindlers. They also pretend to change copper into gold, a peer which they trace to one of their order in the time of the Sultān Altitmish. Some are professional poisoners; others pretend to deal in millstones and steal cattle.

Marco Polo mentions the Jogis under the name of Chughi, and says, "They are properly Abraiman (Brāhmaṇs), but they form a religious order devoted to the idols. They are extremely long-lived, every one of them living to one hundred and fifty or two hundred years. They eat very little, but what they do eat is good, rice and milk chiefly. And these people make use of a very strange beverage; for they make a portion of sulphur and quicksilver mixed together, and this they drink twice every month. This they say gives them long life." Jogis are mostly Gorakh or Kabirpanthi followers.

Bernier mentions the same custom.

More influential and powerful communities have taken con-

trol of Gorakhpanthi shrines, temples and maths throughout the country but Jogis have become a poor begging community and receite Kabīr bhajans, as there is much influence of Gorakhnath on Kabīr and his contemporaries.

It seems due to ignorance and illiteracy Jogis have become as village magicians, astrologers or beggars and have adopted several other professions. Only very few practice Yoga. They call themselves Kabirpanthis or Naths followers of Nath tradition of Gorakhnath.

In Himachal Pradesh Jogi community is included in the list of Scheduled Castes, though it is found in several other states also but in small numbers. It is believed they declare themselves as Kolis (Kabīrpanthis) now and not Jogis for claiming social benefits. According to K.S. Singh : "Usually referred to as Nātha or Kanphata Jogi, they claim descent from Baba Gorakhnath. Jogi is the corrupt form of Yogi and they are considered to be followers of the Yoga system of philosophy founded by Patanjali (Russell and Hira Lal, 1916). Many of them lead an ascetic life and sing songs in praise of Raja Bhartari. They are scattered all over Himachal Pradesh. Their population in Himachal Pradesh is 11,183 (1981 census). The language spoken by them is Bushahari which belongs to the Indo-Aryan family of languages. Hindi is used for inter-group communication and the Devanagrai script for writing. As regards dress, the ascetic branch of the Jogi can be distinguished by their large ear-rings, saffron robes and a sarangi (a single-string musical instrument).

The Jogi are divided into two endogamous groups, swarna and aswarna. The former get both their ears pierced and seek alms only from clean castes, whereas the latter get only one ear pierced and beg from both clean and unclean castes. Each of these sections are further divided into exogamous gotras. Marriages are arranged through negotiation and exchange. Adult marriage is the norm. Gotra exogamy and group endogamy are practised. There is neither bride price nor dowry, but at the time of marriage, the daughter is given gifts. Residence afer marriage is patrilocal. Both widow and widower marriages are recognized. Levirate and sororate are prevalent. Divorce can be secured on grounds of adultery, impotency, mental illness or for practising witchcraft, etc. The father takes up the responsibility fo the children after divorce. Inheritance of property is patrilineal. Pre- and post-delivery restrictions and birth pollution

are reported. Mundan (tonsure) and post-delivery purificatory rites are observed. Kanyadan is an important marriage ritual. The dead are cremated but infants and those who die of small pox and snake bite are buried. The last rites are broadly in accordance with the Hindu religious beliefs and practices. Death pollution is observed for thirteen days. Ancestor worship is practised.

They are Hindū by faith and worshippers of Śiva, Baba Gorakhnath and his disciple, Raja Bartari. They sing Kabir songs and also of other bhagats.

The Brahman, Rajput and Mahajan communities do not accept pacca or kacca food from the Aswarna Jogi. The Aswarna (untouchable) Jogi accept sidha food from all castes. No traditional patron-client relationship exists with any caste. Those in agriculture maintain landlord and cultivator—or farm labour relationships.

The Jogi who are included in the Scheduled Castes list of Himachal Pradesh get grants and loans easily. They have also received land under the twenty point economic programme.

So this is the vast family of Kabirian communities who are true followers of the Panth, which they have kept alive.

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10

MYSTICISM OF KABIR

As already discussed earlier Kabīr is a well known mystic poet. In the history of mystic poetry he occupies an important place. In fact, Vedic and Upanisdic thought, Buddhism, Sufism, Nātha tradition, Hindu mysticism and *vaiṣṇav bhakti* all meet in Kabīr, in a much refined and purest form. In the age of much assimilation of different religions, cultures and societies mystic poet Kabīr exposes the unreality of the materialistic world. For him main aim of mystic practice is to achieve union with God, freedom from darkness, ignorance, supersititons, exploitation and all sorts of ritualism. He condemns in his poetry the religious narrowness and sysmpathises with the masses—in their miseries and their happiness. Researchers, scholars both Indian and foreign have written a lot.

According to Ezekiel : Mysticism is the science that leads from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge, from superstition to wisdom, from subjection to freedom"[1] In every poem there is the voice of revolt against religious narrowness, social prejudices.

Kabīr himself searching the absolute truth describes spiritualism in mystic language. That too is simple, full of mythological characters and religious fervour. Realising God, or searching it within the soul is a great mystic experience, leading to true union with God. This is the highest spiritual joy, liberation from illusion or *māyā*, the wheel of transmigration, the cycle of birth and death. Buddha and Mahavira left the worldly pleasures for nirvana. Causes of human suffering for Kabir are all due to this '*māyā*'. Kabīr calls *māyā*, a great cheat. Māyā has actually cheated Gods and goddesses, sages and saints, what to talk of common people.

As a true religious and spiritual being Kabīr raises his voice against social evils, Brahmanical ritual practices and even the caste distinctions.

Kabīr says the *satguru*, the spirit or word and God are one and the same thing. He says that God is within our soul which is to be searched from spiritual experience. It is our ego, our mind and desire that makes us set up our own will against the will of God. The soul in purest form; has no caste, race, nationality or religion. It is illusion and *māyā* which corrupts the soul. Mysticism deals with the practice how soul is to be freed from this illusion.

Entire *Nirguṇa bhakti* cult and sikh tradition besides other minor spiritual reformatory sects explain in their message that this can be achieved through the grace of perfect master, *Satguru*. Kabīr no doubt is the foremost among the mystic saint poets who explains the way to God realisation. He is Satguru. A Great Teacher. No sect, but within everybody's heart and soul as purest being.

As Ezekiel[2] observes :

"...Kabīr taught that mysticism is the very soul of all existing religions. It is the core of the teachings of Hinduism, Judaism and Islam. Sikh scriptures contain teachings of mysticism in their purest form. Christ was nothing if he was not a true mystic. As is stated in the Encyclopaedia of Religions and Ethics :

> Mystical experience is as old as humanity, is not confined to any one racial stock, is undoubtedly one of the original grounds for personal religion and does not stand or fall with the truth or falsity of the metaphysically formulated doctrine of mysticism... Whatever is seen, heard or felt in these moments is flooded with an inrush from the abysses of an inner life. Deeplying powers not ordinarily put into play, seem suddenly liberated... The individual soul feels invaded, vitalized with new energy, merged with an enfolding presence, liberated and exalted with a sense of having found what it has always sought, and flooded with joy... 'Mysticism' is a doctrine of union with the Absolute... The 'mystic way' this flight of the alone to the 'Alone' is described as steep and hard, lonely and arduous, a way of 'ladders' and 'steps' and 'ascents'.

Writing on the mysticism of Christ, Rufus M. Jones says :

Christ's own personal experience, as it comes to light in the

> Gospels, is the supreme model of true mystical experience. All His words and acts are penetrated with an infinite depth of experience and are fused with a warmth and intimacy of direct fellowship with God... Our accounts, even in the Synoptics, indicate that it was the consciousness of divine Presence that built the apostolic Church... Even when we allow for a legendary strand in the early narratives, we still find ourselves confronted in the Acts with unmistakable evidence of the exta-ordinary revelation of spiritual forces in the early Christian groups."[3]

It is believed Christianity derived its strength and vitality from mysticism alone. Its present-day rites and rituals and external worship are a departure from Christ's teachings. Christian mysticism does not stand isolated. It is born of Jewish mysticism and was strongly supported by Greek and Roman mysticism. Rufus M. Jones, an authority on this subject further says :

> There are many diverse strands in the Christianity of St. Paul and many historical influences converge of him, but no strand is more clearly in evidence than the mystical, and no influence is more certain than that which led him to expect a direct personal experience of the divine Presence... The ethics of St. Paul are inherently bound up with his faith in, and mystical experience of, an inflooding divine Spirit—whether called 'God in you' or 'Christ' or 'the Spirit of Christ' or 'the Spirit'...
>
> The influence of the Johannie's (St. John) writings on mysticism has been for greater than that of the writings of any other New Testament author... Everywhere in these writings we are impressed by the interior depth of the author. We feel sure that either inwardly or outwardly he has 'lain on Christ's bossom', and his personal testimony, 'Of His fulness have we received' is profoundly true. But these writings predominantly turn our gaze... to the historical person (Christ or *Guru*) who was the Logos of God, in whom the glory of God is revealed, and from whom we may receive eternal life.

Dealing with the forces that led to the rise of Protestantism in Europe, Rufus M. Jones says that mysticism was the power behind it :

> The most important new influence was the New Testament now freshly alive in the 16th century in the tongue of the common people, and felt to be the master model of all religious experience and of all true piety. The great classics of medieval mysticism, especially the anonymous *Theologia Germanica* and the *Imitation of Christ*, still spoke to the hearts of all serious seekers for inward religion. All early Protestant mystics either read these books or got from others the substance of the message which they contained. At the same time, the re-discovery of the gospel, with its concrete revelation of God and man and life, brought a new spiritualising power to bear on the minds of men... The mystical element is however, much more marked and emphatic in the contemporary 'spiritual' reformers towards whom the Roman Church early took an antagonistic attitude... All these men were mystical in the primary sense. They found a religion which had its main roots in personal inward experience. They all exalted the inward, living invisible word of God, above the outward written word, the Scriptures."[4]

"The Old Testament is also full of mysticism hidden behind words whose meaning the ordinary reader cannot discover by unaided efforts. The same author points out that :

> The mysticism of the Old Testament clusters mostly round the visionary experiences of the prophets. Isaiah's vision of a God whose 'train filled the Temple' points to the all-inclusiveness of the Deity. Ezekiel's fits of ecstasy are characteristic of many a mystic in all ages. The prophet's (Ezekiel's) higher insight into the will of God and is satisfaction at the attainment of the insight are an example of the 'illumination' which is always one of the steps of the mystic's ladder... The Psalmists often brood on the divinity manifested in the beauteous world of nature... The soul passionately yearns for God, and God reciprocates the yearning in terms of the love between man and woman. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee' (Ps. 73 : 25). Here is the insatible craving of the mystic, the infinity of love's desire. 'Yea, I have loved Thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn Thee.' (Jeremiah 31:3). It is doubtful if the intensity of intimacy

> cannoted by the Hebrew '*ahabhab*' (love) and 'hesedh' (loving kindness) is ever done justice to in translation. Finally, there is the angelic love of the Old Testament. The sight of an angel or the hearing of its *voice* brought about a feeling of being environed with God. It had the effect which every mystical experience in all ages had, viz., it flooded the seer with a new power."[5]

"Tao, which means the Way, is the Chinese equivalent of the Word or Rāma Nāma. The same mysticism that was taught by Kabīr was prevalent for centuries in ancient China, though today it has degenerated into outward formalism. W. Gilbert Walshe writes on Chinese mysticism and describes what the Tao or Word means in *the Encyclopaedia of Religions and Ethics* :

> Tao is the Ultimate Reality, anterior to and higher than heaven, existing before time began, and precedent the manifested God. It is the principle or law of nature, eternal , unchanging, and all-pervading, and as such must have existed prior to any personification... It is the First Cause of all existence manifesting itself in the Creator and the visible universe... Tao is not only the ultimate source of all existence, but it pervades, influences and harmonises all the phenomena of nature, and its quick but all-effective operation is the exemplar upon which all human activities should be modelled, in contradistinction to the hustling officiousness and blustering self-assertiveness which were characteristic of his (Lao-Tsze's) time... Tao is the natural heritage of man, but, in the majority of cases, that inheritance has been set aside by other interests... The whole duty of man is fulfilled when he submits his will and surrenders his being to the influence of Tao, so as to become the unconscious or sub-conscious agent of the great over-ruling principle and power.

Mystic devotion is perfect stillness. It involves no running about, no going to temples or pilgrimage, no heated discourses, no sharp-brained discussions. Mysticism demands perfect quiet, and invincible repose of the body, the mind and the soul. This is achieved by the attachment of the ever-wandering mind to the Word or Rāma Nāma which cleanses the mind and breaks its attachments with the world and its passions.

The ripples of water on every side kiss the water.

Light every where delights in the sun,
And space pervades the sky.
So without action he worships Me,
As ornaments worship the gold,
The fragrance of the sandalwood worships the sandalwood
And the light of the moon is ever with the moon.

—*Dnyāneśwar*

Our Upanishads heard the voice of God, earlier preached by the Vedic rishis. But in the long tradition, it was corrupted by some zealous ones and divided humanity as Dwij and Shudra. After centuries when people realised they protested the very existence of divisional scriptures. After Upanishads and Buddha and Mahavira it was the Sadguru Kabir and Kabir only. Undoutedly voice of Kabir is the heritage of the humanity, the mankind. It exists within human frame. As Kabir and others said:

"...Al-Junayd, a famous *Sufi*, says that God gives to the adept the sharp desire to behold His Essence, then knowledge becomes vision, and vision revelation, and revelation contemplation, and contemplaton existence (with and in God). Words are hushed to silence, life becomes death, explanations are ended and subsistence (baqa) is made perfect. Weariness and care cease, the elements perish and there remains what will not cease, as time that is timeless. Yet mystic stillness is not stagnation, lethargy, catalepsy or a recreation for the idler. A mystic is no idler. Stilling the mind is the most difficult task that anyone can undertake.

Mere running about or worrying does not solve any problems—wordly or spiritual. It only exhibits lack of faith and a weak mind. Kabīr and all other perfect Masters say that you should attach yourself to the Word and remain unconcerned. A mystic such as Kabīr has pity for the stupidity of the world, for he has found the only solution to the problem of gaining peace of mind."[6]

"...Not everyone is fit to receive mystic teachings, the grace of a living Christ and freedom from bondage:

As a poet says :

What profit comes from offerings of milk ?
The snake abandons not his poison.

What profits it to feed the cow on camphor
or bathe the dog in the Ganges ?
Why anoint the ass with sandal or deck the body
of an ape with jewels ?
Why bathe the elephant in the river ?
Again he pours the dust upon himself.

"Kabīr says that the only purpose of our being born as human beings is to go to the feet of *guru*, get from him the grace of Nāma or the Word, and then worship the Lord by attaching ourselves to the Word or Nama Japa, recitation of name of the God.

Kabir says that when we were in our mother's womb, we promised to do this devotion, but forgot all about it when we came out. And for this ingratitude we pay quite heavily. He fearlessly says :

On obtaining this beautiful human body,
Worship the Supreme Lord
before doing anything else.
Why dost thou remain unconcerned
with this fact
When wilt thou again get such a lucky chance?
Remember, thou wilt not get such a body
again for ages;
And then thou wilt repent most bitterly.
Incomparable is the human life,
In the wheel of eighty-four lakhs of births.
Whether thou art a king or a beggar
Wake-up to this one duty;
Remain not unconcerned, I warn thee.
When you were in the hell-fire of the womb,
You promised to remember the Lord,
And recite His name day and night,
If only you were rescued from the agony
of the womb.
You promised to attach all your attention
to His feet,
And fix your mind on His Name.
You promised that whether happy
or miserable,
Whether you lived or died,

Not for a moment would you forget Him.
After you have made that vow,
The Master brought you out.
But you forgot the promise,
And became a captive-prisoner of *Māyā*.
You forgot the promise given in the womb,
The moment you became consicous
of the world outside.
Twelve years thus passed away,
In childish playfulness and ignorance.
Then came youth,
And goaded by ambition,
And intoxicated with vanity,
You walked the walk of the arrogant.
And talked the language of the proud;
You applied scents and sandal-paste
to your body.
And, putting on bright-coloured garments,
You loafed in the by-lanes of ill-repute,
Casting glad eyes at cheap beauties.
And beckoning them with smiles.
Thus passed away the prime of youth,
And then arrived doddering old age.
For lack of strength thy hand began trembling;
And walking soon tired thy feet.
Thy eyes became watery,
And thy mouth gave out foul smell.
Thy throat was choked with phlegm and bile,
And at last all hope of the world was gone.

Beware my friend! mother, father, son or wife;
None will accompany thee on the journey beyond.
Thou wilt have to abandon everything—
This body, wealth, home, worldly work and worldly hope,

And in the end death will pounce on you,
And then you will fall
Into the trap of the eagle of death.

O you dull-head, just know this,

That wihout the help of the Master,
You will not be saved from this tragedy.

If only you would make friends with the Master,
Learn from him the path of salvation,
And attach your mind to the Master's feet,
And catch hold of the Name of the Lord,
You would be fearless,
And would not undergo the least suffering.
This is the game—go to the Master,
Get the Word, and worship the Lord.
This leads to salvation,
Declares Kabīr most emphatically,
Most emphatically, most emphatically.[7]

—Kabīr

All saints have praised for the Guru. He is merciful, like God he shows the path to eternal bliss, salvation :

Here Ezekiel quotes teachings of some well known saint-poets who come to reveal us the way to achieve God realisation to release us from eternal bondage of birth and rebirth as repeated by Maharaj Charan Singh in his thought.

O brother! without the *guru*
There can be no (spiritual) knowledge.
God and ask Brahma, and (the sages) Narad and Ved Vyās.
They will confirm this.

—Sahajobai

When the *guru* gave me the torch fo wisdom,
The truth behind all creation
Revealed itself to me.

—Nāmadev

Lo, the guru has shown the way
To the Merciful One;
Key in hand
He has opened every door.

—Dādū

God and the perfect Master are equal.
Sunder adds (this special clause):
Only the guru can give you (spiritual) knowledge.

—Sunderdās

I see only Lord Krishna everywhere,
There is no body else who is visible. —*Mirabai*
Saints take birth only to wear themselves out
In the service of giving salvation to the world.
—*Tukārām*

Extremly lukcy are they who meet a real saint.
Some may tell the past, present and future;
Some may stop the sun from setting;
Some may easily walk over a sea;
But difficult, difficult, difficult, indeed,
Is it to meet a real saint."[8]
—*Ekanāth*

God is within us, He has no caste
He is kind to every one.
—*Rāvidās*

"Who is a Master? What are his qualifcations?

Outwardly a Master is like any other ordinary person. A perfect Master leads a family life, earns his own living, shows no outward signs of his spiritual status, wears no special clothes or costumes, and does not use a rosary or smear ashes on his body. May be a Koli-Kori weaver like Kabir. He may be rich like Dharmadas; a farmer like *Guru* Nānak; a grocer like Tukārām; a potter like Gora Kumbhar; a gardener like Savta Mali. He may belong to the lowest caste like Chokha Mela, who was a Sudra water carrier, or like Ravidās a cobbler. Even women like Sahajobāī, Dayābāī and Mīrābāī have been saints. The criterior is not caste, creed, colour, race or religion, wealth or poverty. The criterion is spiritual attainment.

A perfect Master such as Kabīr is one who has reached the highest spiritual region and is in intimate tune with the Lord. He is a master of the spiritual path and guides his disciples all the way through the journey."[9]

Vaiṣṇava poetess Sahajobāī says that a true *Guru* can help in freeing from the cycle of birth and death. There is much influence of Buddhism and Jainism on her verses :

Without the Word is darkness within:
A man doth not get his g\ d (spiritual treasure),
Nor is he freed from the cycle of birth and death.
In the hands of the Satguru lies the key (to the treasure).

No one else can open the door;
But only by perfect good furtune is a guru found.
—*Sahajobāī*

In *Gāthā* the same view point is repeated :

May the Lord give us the Word
May He unite us with the absolute,
When we have undergone successfully
The disciplines whereby vice is overthrown by virtue,
Which makes man divinely meritorious,
And which brings salvation unto men and gods alike.
—*Gāthā 48.1*

Kabīr boldly says :

Oh, brother sādhu, how can they heart and mine be one ?
I explain what I have seen with my own eyes;
You only repeat what you have read in books. (Scriptures)
I explain to disentangle people from the world;
You address them to confuse and confuound.
I advise people to keep vigil for the devotion of the Lord;
But you keep slumbering the whole night.
I advise detachment from the world;
But you are a prey of desires.
For ages and ages I have been explaining this,
But none accept my advice.
You are a profligate and have wasted your wealth
of human life,
Oh my brother sādhu, wash thyself
In the ever-flowing waters of the Master's grace,
Then alone wilt thou be released from the wheel of transmigration.
—*Kabīr*

(Kabīr uses phrases like "I explain what I have seen with my own eyes" and "ever-flowing waters of the Master's grace," which are similar to those used by Christ.)

Ezekiel further writes:

Mystic worship brings us into contact with reality and takes us to the real spiritual regions; and our experiences there are real and not imaginary. What the Rev. J.B. Edwards says of Tukārām in *Dnyaneśwar the Outcast Brahmin* is equally applicable to all saints:

> The greatest saint and the greatest poet of Śivāji's time was Tukārām. He walked with his god, talked with him, took him to task, settled quarrels with him, consulted him, shared his lot with him, and nothing else was so near and dear to him as was his Viṭhobā. This attitude of his mind has made his devotional flights so real that while reading his poetry one finds himself as it were in the midst of a new life, and not of mere thoughts. Excepting a few *abhaṅgs*' written on the early life of Kṛṣṇa, all his poetry has for its theme his own experiences in his relation to the world and to his God."[10]

True Saints are the purest souls. They are the kindest and ford makers the path finders. They lead the mankind to light from ignorance and darkness. "Saints do not come to establish any religion or to reform old ones. They have a loftier object. The Rev. J.B. Edwards writes in *Dnyaneśwar the Outcast Brahmin*:

> In the great land of Maharastra these four poets, viz., Dnyaneshwar, Mukundarāj, Nāmdev and Viṣṇudās are considered as Hindū religious reformers by some, but in my humble opinion they were sages who had hardly any idea of reforming Hinduism on national lines, but who had loftier visions than their contemporaries, were personally true to these ideals, enjoyed them, most tenaciously held them, and thus became example and gurus to their co-religiounists.

The ways of mystics baffle the world in the same manner that Kabīr and Christ baffled their contemporaries—the priests and the Roman rulers. They talk a language of contrariness. But even material life is not logic, and certainly the spiritul path is not. It travels beyond the range of human reasoning power. N.R. Phatak has portrayed the characteristics of a mystic very clearly:

> What are the marks of him who has become a dhyani ? First, he is always at one with God. Secondly, he has his *buddhi* (intellect) in full power and perfections; then, he has *dhyāna* (knowledge of God) that never fades; next, he is above all illusion or self-delusion; he is patient, full of meekness and forgiveness, and ever guided by truth. He had self-control. He regards pleasure and pain as equal. He is not swayed by fear and is ever courageous. He is characterized by the spirit of harmlessness, equality and equanimity. He is ever con-

tented, clam and austere, not taken in by fame nor depressed by want of it or by ill fame.

These are the qualities of saints and we see them in abundance in Christ, Kabīr and other saints. We must approach them with reverence and devotion, if we desire any spiritual benefit from them. Masters do not conduct debating societies, nor encourage intellectual acrobatics. The genuine seeker seeks God, not opportunities for intellectual polemics :

We should approach the Saints respectfully;
It is heart-breaking to deal with low people.
A vagabond goes about braying like an ass,
And gets beaten on the back by *Yama* (the Lord of Death).
He talks like a fool and does not understand the occasion;
That he is in the presence of perfect Master.

—*Tukārām*

Even the wise in the worldly sense may be fools spiritually. It is spiritual fools who indulge in polemics with Masters :

Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

—*Proverbs 1 : 7*

Wisdom is too high for a fool.

—*Proverbs 24 : 7*

There are intellectuals who think themselves wise in engaging saints in useless discussions. Saints put them in the above category.

Some Christians believe that Christ became the son of God by sheer accident or by the arbitrary choice of God. But mystics such as Chirst reach their heights only after great spiritual struggles. They do not become the sons of God just accidently; they pay the necessary price for it in physical, mental moral and spiritual struggle."[11]

In their spiritual thought there is certainly no place for caste distinctions. Equality is foremost in the eyes of saint, as all are children of God, almighty. After Buddha and Christ, Kabir, Nank and a good member of saints guided the humanity through message of love.

Bījak : Treasure of Mysticism and Spiritual Knowledge

Bījak of Kabīr shows the valuable path for finding out the real-unreal elements of the worldly existence, in proper and convincing way through a suitable and appropriate language. His mysticism, his philosophical thought, his revolt against social prejudices and ritualism is all reflected in the Bijak. It preaches the spiritual knowledge, strengthens morally and shows the right path to spiritual advancement and social interaction.

He ceaselessly ventured to establish unity in diversity by preaching to one and all the eternal religion of humanity in a multireligious and caste ridden society.

A commentary of Bījak of Kabīr Saheb was broughtout by Hajur Prakashamaninam Sāheb under the auspices of Kabīr Āśhram, Jamnagar. There are other editions but this is more anthentic and reliable.

In his preface to the Bījak Śrī Hajur Prakashamaninam Saheb writes :

"Kabīr Sāheb who possessed all-surpassing exhaltation, who was the ocean of virtues and who was the veritable sun in dispelling the darkness in the form of various false ostentations (of pride), took his seat on the ground facing Śiva's city of Kāśi and preached, with a resolute mind, the oneness of the Supreme Self to his disciples after removing the deeply rooted distinction between Ārya and Anārya."[12]

Kabir strengthened true Dharma, the religion of love, brotherhood, unity universalism and uplist of the downtrodden and crushed artisans and cultivators when Muslim rule in India was attacking on our social religious fabric.

Kabir undoubtedly took the mankind from ignorance to knowlede, from darkness to light and from worldy pleasure to everlasting spiritual happiness.

Ignorance Cause of Unhappiness

Hazur Saheb farther writes, "In this world, it is not only the man who strives for the removal of unhappiness and the attainment of happiness but also all the living beings such as beasts, birds, insects, moths and the like do the same. Let us take for example a human being. All that a man does-worldy as well as other worldy—he does this for the attainment of happiness only. The activity that

takes place for doing the most difficult work is also meant for the attainment of happiness only. Thus, even after striving ceaselessly for the attainment of happiness, the real happiness is not obtained. Whatever is obtained is only the appearance of happiness mixed with unhappiness. The only reason for this phenomenon is ignorance. Our venerable sages and saints propagated the lamp of the Vedic knowledge in the world for the removal of ignorance only and developed the Vedic idea through the various *Puraṇas* and *Smṛtis*. Subsequently, the different system of philosophy were brought into existence for dispelling the darkness of ignorance.

The different Ācāryas (prominent preachers) preached the practice of mutually different endless means after propagating the different ideas and opinions for the removal of ignorance only. It short, the theism and atheism, the left path *Vāma-mārga*) and the right path (Dakṣiṇa-mārga), various *japas* various modes of the world which can prevent the high-souled from achieving their target ? The name of the highly revered real preceptor Kabīr Sāheb belongs to the category of such highsouled ones only. This work, the *Bījak*, is filled upto the brim with his nectar-like words. We are fortunate to have this auspicious opportunity to drink deep into this work. To be impudently ready on my part to describe in limited words the unfathomable ocean of knowledge of Kabīr Sāheba is exactly like what the crest-jewel of poets, Kālidās has said with reference to himself viz. "I, through of dull intellect and yet aspiring for fame deserved by a great poet, will become an object of ridicule like a dwarf raising his hands to pink those fruits which can be plucked by a tall person only." I have undertaken the present work leaning on the above-said worthy statement inspite of knowing the limitations of my intellect. "This is the greatness and glory of the words (speech) of the great persons that even person of dull intellect achieves success in his attempt by making statements following the principle propounded by their words while even *Bṛhaspati* has to become silent in the end if he propounds a principle which is contrary to their words."[13]

"To introduce Kabīr Sāheb is like holding a lamp before the sun. He was the friend of the poor and the purifier of the fallen. His words which appear apparently dry but which are beneficial in the end work like the much experience pungent medicinal mixture for driving away the fever in the form of egoism on the part of the vain people who love ostentation. He devoted his whole life in repairing

the old and shattered temple of the eternal true religion. He went on keeping the people of the upper classes alert for keeping sympathetic attitude towards the downtrodden people who are very much helpful in the attainment of the prosperity of the people of the upper three castes. He went on suffering bravely and cheerfully the severst and the hardest tortures inflicted on him by the wicked on account of raising his voice against the tyrannies of the tyrants. He was, as if, compassion incarnate. This is why he went on rebuking in the befitting severe words those Hindūs as well as those Muslims who were religious imposters and who practised violence under the cover of religion e.g. "you fashion the earthen goddesses and gods and offer them as oblations the living beings after cutting them to pieces. If your goddesses and gods are real, why do they themselves not catch hold of the living beings and eat them up ?"—(*Bījak* : *Śabda* 70). Moreover, "both the Hindūs as well as the Muslims have given up mercy. Both of them kill the living beings in their particular ways. Thus, the houses of both have caught the fire of violence."—(*Bījak* : *Śabda* 10). "O fool! you do not understand Rāma. You brought a cow forcible and fell it on the ground. Then you cut its throat and killed it. You turned a living being into a dead body and yet you say that it is sacrificed for a religious purpose!" (*Bījak* : *Śabda* 83). Moreover, "You kill living beings at those places where you preach religion. Friend! you do a bad thing. If you are called a Brahmin inspite of such a bad act then who would be called a butcher?"—(*Bījak*! *Śabda* 46)."[14] It is what Buddha said and condemnsed animal secrifice in Yajnas.

"According to the statement viz. "only the rare people realised the absolute knowledge preached by Kabīr Sāheb", Kabīr Sāheb mostly preached the truth from the spiritual point of view, addressing the best suited persons, with the idea of making them realise the final goal viz. the absolute liberation. Moreover, he has repeatedly preached to make good use of the holy places and various vows, fasts (*Rojā*) and prayers (*Namāja*), the Vedas and the *Kurān* which are the as traditional means for attaining liberation both for the Hindūs as well as for the Muslims by refutng the various frauds and heresies which are deterimental to the attainment of that supreme position. According to him, a religion which is contrary to the Sentient Self is no religion. The worship of the Self and the satisfaction arising from that worship are the real other deity which is equal to compassion on the living beings and worship of the

Self". He has taught in a befitting way to follow the above-mentioned turth by making use of all sorts of words-soft as well as severe-keeping in view the prevailing circumstances and the persons concerned e.g. "I will consider him as my grand-father, brother or a father who improves his birth as a human being. Moreover, I will become the servant at his feet. That person always lives blissfully who unfolds the warp of the actions while having the physical body i.e. one who realises the true understanding by becoming free from all desires—(*Bījak Sākhī* 322)—"The Hindūs continue to worship the deities (i.e. they perform idol-worship, the worship of the insentient) and the Muslims remains engaged in the worship of the false heavenly God inspite of my repeated preachings by falling at their feet as well as by shedding tears (to touch their heart)"[15]

"In spite of this being the position, it is not proper in any way to entertain any doubt with respect to Kabīr Sāheb that he has baselessly attacked the matters realating to the Vedic principle and its proponents and protectors who were great sages as well as the matters relating to the incarnations. Although Kabīr Sāheb has considered the unqualified knowledge of the Self as the direct means of liberation. e.g. he asserts "One who understands It, realises It"; yet, he has, at no place, mentioned the futility of the genuine (sātvic) ceremonial worship and the worship from the bottom of the heart as well as the futility of *yoga*, *Japa*, austerities, self-control, holy places, various vows, acts of charity and the like which are the means for the attainment of liberation according to the tradition. But he has refuted only the wrong use of the said means made by the religious hypocrites. Thus he, asserts, "These people (i.e. the Brahmins in name only) have already given up the hope of realising Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. They have devoted themselves only to the rituals after completing their traditional study. Thus, they have become servants of the rituals as well as of the worship of the insentient idols"—(*Bījak* : Vipramatisi). His views on the worship of incarnations are as follows. 'Rāma' is generally understood by the people as 'Rāmacandr', the son of Daśarath' but the inner meaning of 'Rāma' is quite different. The primary meaning of 'Rāma' is : 'the Pure sentient'. It is understandable that the people say what they see under the influence of the wrong impression. That way, even a rope is taken as a serpent on account of the wrong impression but a rope cannot become a snake. Though the incar-

nations are our ideals on account their being 'Puruṣottama' and though it is beneficial for us to follow their good path and imbibe their virtues yet it is just a fancy and nothing more to aspire for liberation by becoming averse to 'Rāma', 'the Resident of heart'. 'Just as water is the only support for the fish, in the same way, *Hari* is the only support for the wise devotees'. This is the condition of the wise devotees but those who are devoted to activities (*karmas*) and who are the ordinary worshippers differ from this point of view. Therefore they go on pointing out various means for realising liberation"—(*Bījak* : *Śabda* 109)."[16]

"Moreover, "O saints! that is *Māyā* which comes and goes. This 'Sāheb' is the protector of all. There is no '*Kāla*' (end) for Him. He neither comes from anywhere nor goes anywhere. All the ten incarnations are the divine *Māyā*. Do not worship them as '*Sāheb*. O saints! please listen. Those who come into existence and go out of existence are others only i.e. they are not 'Sāheb' free from all the modifications"—(*Bijak* : Śabda 8). Moreover, "O saints! O gentlemen; do not trust this unreliable mind. The residence of that cheat is your heart only. Hence be on your guard and do not lose what beings (knowledge and the like) to you. This cheat holds its sway from the earth to the sky. Moreover, the snare of actions which is fashioned by this cheat only extends in all the ten quarters to which it brings the ignorant repeatedly and entangles them. The victory-flag of the cheat flutters on *yoga*, *japa*, austerities, self-control, holy places, various vows, acts of charity, nine-fold devotion, the *Veda* and the *Kurān*. Some have obtained the power (achievement) to make true what they say while some others have obtained some other kind of achievement. Thus, the accomplished persons (*siddhas*) of both the communities—the *Hindūs* as well as the Muslims—go on earning the honour and prestige from the worldy people. According to Kabīr Sāheb, the entire world had become blind on account of the absence of discrimation on its part. Under such circumastances, to whom would Kabīr Sāheb explain the truth ? These people remain the servants and slaves of one false *Rām* and *Khudā* (residing in the seventh heaven), in the water and in the stones, becoming averse to the real Rām or Khudā residing in each and every heart"—(*Bījak* : Śabda 113). His ideas regarding the holy places are as follows. "Three persons—a fickle-hearted, a fickleminded and a thief—visisted the holy places with a view to become free from their sins but they could

not become free from even one of their respective sins. On the contrary, they returned with a heavy load of the additonal sins. The wicked persons, who visited the holy places, merely took their bath in the cold water there and died being carried away by the stream of their sins committed there. Kabīr Sāheb points out that such sinners are re-born as demons and repent much on suffering continuous miseries. A holy place has become a creeper of poison for such sinful people. This creeper has fully spread itself since ages. These ignorant sinners themseves have dug up the poisonous roots. Hence, why will they not eat the poison in the form of the result of their sins?"—(*Bījak* : *Sākhīs* : 214, 215, 216).

"Those who believe God to be residing in one place only cannot be afraid of Him like those who believe Him to be all-pervading. Therefore, he has made the following statements in order to remove the wrong impression of those who believe God to be dwelling in one place by pointing out that God is all-pervading. "If Khudā (god), according to your belief, resides in a mosque then please tell us to whom the other regions belong and who resides there. The Hindūs believe that Rām resides in the holy places and in the idols. As a matter of fact, neither of the two have cared to know the truth. The Hindūs believe that *Hari* resides in the East i.e. in the milky ocean while the Muslims point out the residence of *Allaha* to be in the West i.e. in Maccā. If you really aspire to have the holy sight to *Allaha* and Rām then search the residences of hearts of all the living beings attentively, humbly and lovingly i.e. become friend of one and all. You will realise Karīm and Keśav in these very hearts"—(*Bijak* : *Śabda* 97). Hence, how far is it proper, keeing the said statements in view, to call them as baseless attack on the places of worship? If these *Hindūs* and the *Muslims* who are violent would have considered even the hearts of the innocent animals as the real temples of Rām and Khudā in the same way in which they consider their respective places of worship as the temples of Rām and Khudā then they would never have dared to put a sword or a knife on the throats of those animals. The real preceptor (Kabīr Sāheb) has stressed this point repeatedly. 'O fool! O simpleton! you have forgotten your origin. Therefore, you do not realise Rām residing in the heart of one and all living beings—(*Bijak* : *Śabda* 83). Moreover, "O Sheikh Taki! please listen. God resides in each and every living organism".[18]

The Fundamental Principle

"Kabīr Sāheb has suggested the unqualified, pure Sentient Supreme Self as the final Principle because a word becomes capable of expressing its meaning by resorting to those four viz. *Jāti*, *Dravya*, *Guṇa* and *Kriyā* according to the *Mahābhāṣya*. Hence, *Śabda* cannot work in its primary sense with reference to this unqualified Principle (*Nirviśeṣa Tattva*) according to the above mentioned rule. The following statements viz. "The Speech returns along with the mind without reaching It." "He spoke without words" and He gave silence alone as a reply" also refer to this secret. If nothing is said with reference to this Principle then how can the ignorant people be preached about this ? Therefore, the *Vedas* have mentioned that Principle by stating it "not this" i.e. that Principle is not such a Principle in the way in which the ignorant understand it. This point has been mentioned by Ācārya Puṣpadanta also when he says, "O God! your greatness and glory is beyond even the Vedas, the Goddess Sarasvatī (goddess of Learning) and *Yogins*. Then what to talk of the human beings? The Vedas (Śruti) are startled at this greatness and glory and describe it as "not this". Who can describe how valuable is that greatness? Who can know it? Whose mind and speech are not attracted to sing the glory of your greatness?" Kabīr Sāheb has also expressed his views on this subject.

The following are the words of Kabīr Sāheb who suggests the fundamental principle i.e. the unqualified principle. "O respected learned man! your deliberations are false. There is no creation, no creator in the state of the original nature of the Self (*nija-pada*). In the region of the Self, there does not exist the gross phenomenon and there does not exist the subtle phenomenon. Moreover, the air, the fire, the sun and the moon do not exist there. Even the earth and the water do not exist there. There does not exist Kāla of the nature of light. The mind, the speech and the physical body also do not exist there. There is religion, sacred formula (mantra) the prescribed worship and the selfcontrol. Under such a conditons, could it be called one or two? There does not exist either *Gorakha* or incarnated Rām. The Vedic throughts also do not exist there. *Hari*, *Hara*, *Brahmā*, *Śiva* and *Śakit* also do not exist there. A holy place as well as the religious conduct (*ācāra*) do not exist there. That Ātma-deva has no mother, no father and no preceptor (*guru*). Well, then, would It be called one or two? Kabīr Sāheb points

out that he alone who, on obtaining a human body, realises Him is the preceptor while we are his disciples"—(*Bijak : Śabda* : 43)."[19]

Thoughts which cause Knowledge

On the philosophical thought contained in Kabīr's verses in Bījak, Hajur Sāheb traces the means for producing the thought which cause knowledge as following :

1. Non-injury

"There are, in the heart, the three humours—the impure secretion (mala), the distraction (*vikṣepa*) and the ignorance—which veil the real nature of a thing. 'Mala is removed by duly performing the *karmas* (actions). The *karmas* are of two kinds—those that are preceptory and those that are prohibited. Those *karmas* which are enjoyed by the scriptures such as the Vedas and the like and by the realised great men are called preceptory (*vihita*) e.g. "A Brahmin should perform the morning, noon and evening prayers (*sandhyā*) every day" and the worship of a preceptor and the like. Those *karmas* the performance of which is prohibited are called the prohibited *karmas* e.g. the injury to living beings, telling a lie and the like. The killing of living beings (*hiṃsā*) for the sacrifices and the like is prohibited in every way by the injuctions of the *Vedas*, *Smṛtis* and the realised great men. Such injùctions are "Do not kill a living being"; "One has to suffer the consequences of a good or a bad *karma* performed by him/her"; "Do not kill a pitiable living being because the same life runs in each living being"—(*Bījak*: *Sakhī* 212): "You will not be saved even if you go to place of pilgrimage with a view to get rid of the sin of killing a living being and even by giving crores of diamonds in charity at that place"—(*Bījak* : *Sākhī* 213).

The deep critical examination of the sacriptural pros and cons of the question of killing of animals for the sacrificial purposes reveals that the killing of animals cannot be the enjoinment of the *Vedas*. Consequently, the purport of the *Vedas* and the like favours the non-killing only and not the killing of animals. Those evil persons who ardently long for the taste of the tongue and who do not know the real inner-meaning have misled the worldy people by interpreting the scriptural injuctions in the sense favourable to them. Kabīr Sāheb has uttered the following words keeping in view such Brahmins only, the interpreters of the Vedic injuctions and the au-

thors of Smṛtis. "Those who did not cultivate the sense of the universeal brotherhood are destroyed in the fire of mutual hatred. Moreover, those who left the shelter of Rām, the All-witnessing Overlord and entangled their mind with many deceits met their untimely end. Those leftists who interpreted the Vedas in the wrong way resorted to the hell and are thus lost. They did study the Vedas but they failed to understand their deeper meaning"—(*Bījak* : *Ramainī* 63); "Sir! the *Smṛti*, the form of the scripture pertaining to the Duty, is the daughter of the *Vedas*. She has already come having the rope in the form of actions (with desire) in her hands. The cunning people have woven the rope of the statements of the new *Smṛtis* to achieve their own selfish ends. They have fastened their own necks with this rope. This is their false infatuation and it is the noose of death for them. They got themselves fastened easily with the bondage of works but it became difficult for them to be free from this bondage. The people came to be misled under the charm of the pleasures of senses"—(*Bījak* : *Ramainī* 33); "For the ignorant, the *Vedas* and *Purānas* are like the mirror given in the hands of a blind person. How can a spoon realise the taste of a sweet dish? An ass load itself with the burden of the sandal-wood"—(*Bījak* : *Ramainī* 32) and "They have no knowledge of Rām, the Resident of the hearts of all the embodied beings. Had they know Rām, the undue hatred and the uneven outlok would not have been there on their part. They interpret even the Vedas and the *Purāṇas* according to their likings. Moreover, they do not obey the teachings of the Vedas. The fire of hatred burns constantly in their hearts and the in never extinguished"—(Bījak : Ramainī 61)."[20]

Hazur Saheb further explains : "Kabīr Sāheb has refuted the censurable conduct of those Brahmins who earn their bread by killing the animals under the excuse of making the offerings to the gods in the following way. 'The meat-eating professionals, making their livelihood on the scriptures, look only to the words and not to the spirit thereof. Hence they carry out liberally the injury-ordaining modern *Smṛti* injuctions saying 'the scriptures say so' because this suits their purpose. Moreover, they dismiss such injuctions as 'the living beings should not be killed' but they do not search their heart and do not try to understand what their heart says with reference to the subject. Over and above this, the most unfortunate thing is done. The living animlas (goats and the like)

are killed to please the dead (i.e. the insentient idols) and are offered at the feet of those idols. 'These self-centred people do not distinguish between the living and the dead"—(*Bījak* : *Śabda* 93) "To kill the animals under the pretext of offering them to the deities is nothing but cheating the people for the sake of the taste of tongue because the deities are the protectors of all and not the killers. If it is taken for granted for a while that the goddesses and the gods fashioned from the clay are real and that they are really thirsty of the blood of the animals, then why do they (though able) themselves not catch hold of them and eat them according to the statement, 'What sin does a hungry person not commit?"—(*Bījak* : *Śabda* 70); "O pure-hearted person! the priests are butchers to the core. After killing the goats, they rush to kill the buffaloes. They do not feel sorry at all for what they do"—(*Bījak* : *Śabda* 11); "It is agreed that one can certainly have a right to eat meat and fish if one can grow them in a field after planting them like the vegetables"—(*Bījak* : *Śabda* 70) "Kabīr Sāheb points out that the people are condemned to the hell on account of the taste of their tongue" etc. The gambling and the telling of a lie are also the prohibited *karmas* like killing a living being. All the above-mentioned karmas are of three kinds on account of the physical, oral and mental difference. The acceptance and the performance of the preceptory acts and the abandonment of the prohibited acts result in the purification of the heart which, in turn, gives rise to the test (*ātma-vicāra*)."[21]

2. The Company of the Good People

"The company of the good is the principal means among the means for the purification of heart because the knowledge of what is good and what is bad (i.e. discrimination) is not possible wihout the company of the good. Gosvāmi Tulsidās has pointed out this as follows. "The discrimination does not result without the grace of Rām". God 'Kṛṣṇa has stated this point to the revered *Akrūra* (Eleventh **Skandha** (Section) of the *Śrimad Bhāgavata*) in the following way. "The holy places full of water and the gods fasioned from the clay and stones certainly purify the people but they do it after a long time while the saints (the good people) purify other by their sacred physical presence only". "The good are my heart while I am their heart. They do not know any one else but ME and I also do not know (as My own) any one else but them".

The same thing is preached by the real preceptor Kabīr Sāheb, the ocean of compassion, to his disciple revered Dharmadās Saheb in the following words. "O Dharmadās! 'Sādhu' (a pure-hearted good person) is my name. Seek the refuge at the feet of a 'Sādhu'. Do not search and enter elsewhere. When you enter then enter into a 'Sādhu' only." As a matter of fact, the saints (*Sādhus*), the removers of all the sins, are verily the mobile sacred places (*tīrtha*) as has been stated by the revered poet in the following words. "The saints are delightful and auspicious. They are the mobile best sacred places in the world. They are easily available to all on all days and everywhere. They pacify afflictions on serving them reverentially. They are indescribable and divine and the best sacred places. They yield fruits immediately. Their superhuman power is manifest." One should think of the feelings of friendship, compassion, cheerfulness and indifference which are extremely useful for the purification of heart after cultivating the discrimination through the company of the good (saints) as described above. "The ocean of the mind becomes pacified and pure on account of the removal is due order fo malice, sense of ungratefulness, envy and anger by the establishment of friendship, compassion, cheerfulness and neutrality (indifference) for those who are happy, for those who are unhappy, for those who are saintly and for those who are sinners respectively"—(*Yogadarśana, Samādhipāda* : *Sūtra* 33)."[22]

3. The Desireless Karma

The performance of a work without the desire for fruit also purifies the heart because all the works performed with a desire for fruit (e.g. a sacrifice, an act of charity and the like) become the cause of bondage. In the Gītā, God Kṛṣṇa offer His observations with reference to the Vedic rituals which enjoin the works constituted of the three constituents, in the following way. "No firm determination is found in the mind of those, O Pārtha! whose discriminations is carried away by the flowery words of the unwise, who take pleasure in the euologistic tenets of the Vedas and declare that there is nothing else besides;"—(II. 42) and "The *Vedas* deal with the three constituents (*guṇas*). O Arjuna! be free from the triad of the constituents, from the pairs of opposites, from getting and keeping, be ever composed and established in Self" —(II. 45). The Vedas also declare; "There are the insecure rafts in the form of the sacrifies—these sacrifices and the like performed with a desire for the attainment of

heaven and which have eighteen-sixteen *Ṛtviks*, (officiating priests), a host and his wive—cause the cycle of birth and death. Therefore, those who lean on these rafts (in the from of the sacrifices and the like) get drowned in the ocean of the wordly existence"—(Muṇḍakopaniṣd). Kabīr Sāheb, keeping this point of view in his minds, has observed as follows with reference to the Brahmins who maintain that the rituals are all-in-all for the attainment of the goal of humna life. "They have become devoted to the formal rituals and the formal caremonial worship of the insentient idols. They study the rituals and run after them. If one seeks their guidance on this point, they manage to convert and convice him of the utility of the rituals only" and "They censure those great souls who are detached from such activities and befriends those who perform such activities"—(*Bījak* : *Vipramatīsī* 6 and 7)."[23] But today many people discard Gita as Brahmanical work which avoids and discriminates between poor and the rich.

4. The Worship of the Nam or Name

"The worship also, like a desireless action, removes the distraction and purifies the mind. Of all the worships, the worship of a real preceptor who is nothing but the form of the Supreme Sentient is the most prominent worship because of the knowledge of the Supreme Self, as propounded the Scriptures, becomes manifest in the heart of one who worships one's preceptor as God. "May your reverential regards for the real preceptor who guided you to the right path be every maintained!". Kabīr Sāheb points out that the Supreme Self is verily the place for those who have realised the Essence. According to the statement, "this *Ātman* is the very place for the wise," it behave those who aspire for the fruit in the form of liberation available in the Immortal Region, the Indestructible Region, not to get lost in the apparent beauties of the *Māyic Vasaṅta* and to obtain the knowledge of the Essence"—(*Bījak* : *Vasaṅta* 1). The worship of a Name also, like the worship of a preceptor, leads to the spiritual prosperity and the final beautitude. Out of many names, 'Satyanāma' is the personal name of *Ātman* (the Pure Sentient) because the Pure Sentient is real (*satya*) and the name which expresses 'the real' can alone be 'real'. There is nothing greater than This. Hence the name of '*Satya*' is '*Satya*'. Its name is '*Satya*'—(*Chāndogyopaniṣad*). Kabīr Sāheb has also described at great length the greatness and glory of '*Satyanāma*'

with the works viz. The *Vedas* and the *Smṛtis* "call it '*Satya*' and '*Satya*' only". All the followers of the tradition of the saints viz. *Udāsī*, *Sikhs*, Satyanāmī, Dariyāpanthī, Kabīrapanthī etc. come under this spacious banner. Or it will be more proper to say that all the followers of the tradition of the saints have joined together on account of this Satyanāma which is like a joining thread. All these followers of various sects are the worshippers of '*Satyanama*'. It is matter of regret that some of our simple-hearted followers of Kabīr Sect do not know this greatness and glory of '*Satyanāma*' and are gradually becoming averse to this highest '*Satyanāma*'.

Ignorance (*āvaraṇa*) is one of the three humours of the internal organ of sense (heart). This ignorance is removed by the knowledge of the nature of the Self. (This has already been pointed out). In the same way *Sahaja yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga* (*Īśvarapraṇidhāna*) are also used for the purpose of the purification of heart. Kabīr Sāheb has refuted only the *Haṭha-yoga* which is the cause of miseries as it is rooted in desires. "*Māyā* is dear to those who are imperectly (immaturely) accomplishd"; "do not reside in the city (a physical body) of a Jogiyā (a *Hatha-yogin*). One who dwells in this city will become a *Jogiyā*"—(*Bījak* : *Śabda* 66). Kabīr Sāheb has refuted the deceits and frauds practised under the guise of *tīrtha*, *japa*, *tapa* etc. for the good of the people. He has also very forcefully refuted the heavenly (*āsamānī*) 'Khuda' and the various tyrannies of the Muslims. "There did not not exist *Ādam*, His wife *Havvā*, holy men and the prophets before the creation of the world. Those Muslim priests who brought into being the false show in the form of mosques, fasts, religions, festivals (Iad and the like) also did not exist then. Please show us that heaven which becomes available by pouring the blood of the innocent. Who created such a heaven ? Where is it situated? On whose worlds, do you drive a knife ?"—(*Bījak* : *Śabda* 98)."[24]

5. The Casteism, Touchability and Untouchability

Hazur Saheb further writes : "Kabīr Sāheb's views on the casteism are as follows. An inidvidual soul assumes a high or a low physical body depenaing on the one's rise and fall in this very life also is dependent on one's acts only. Accordingly, 'the revered *Vyāsa* was born of a daughter of a boatman, the revered Parāśara of a daughter of an outcaste, the revered Śukadeva of Śuki and the revered Kaṇāda of Ulūkī"—(*Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*). This means that

though the above-mentioned Vyāsa and others were born in low families yet they were called Brahmins on account of their supreme virtues. The mature reflection on history, *Purāṇas* and the like convinces us that they are the *guṇas* (constituents) and *Karmas* (actions) which obtain Brahminhood and the other positions and not merely the birth. Hence, the divine words viz. "The fourfold castes are created by ME in accordance with the distinction of *Guṇa* and *Karma*" are also in perfect harmony with the point under discussion because 'that which is known immediately on seeing a form is caste.' According to this characteristic of a caste given by *Vāratikakāra* the human race alone is the true race. Kabīr Sāheb has kept this point of view in his mind and has accordingly accepted the superiority of the human race and the inferiority of other (imagined) races. "O Brahmins! if you are proud of the Brahmin caste, it would have been much better if you were born along with the three staffs. The fact is that a Brahmin is born as a Śūdra only and again becomes a Śūdra after his death. By putting on a false symbalic thread of initiation, you have commercialised religion in the world"—(*Bījak Ramainī* 62). Kabīr Sāheb's view on touchability and untouchability are clear. No human being is untouchable on account of his birth. It is agreed that a person can be kept at a respectable distance on account of his uncleanliness. Barring this consideration, any other hypocrisy without the purity of heart will invite disasters. "Please note. The untouchability is associated even with food and water. Moreover, it is from the untouchable (semen and the like) that the world is created. According to Kabīr Sāheb, if any one is free fom untouchability, it is he alone who is free from Māyā (*Bījaks* : *Śabda* 41)."[25] Brahmins quoting Veda is thus wrong which say that God or Purush created caste. Kabir was deadly against high and low caste.

The Code Words Employed in 'The Bījak'.

"The word 'Rāma' suggests the qualified (the incarnated Rāma) Rāma at several places and the Unqualified Pure nature (the Supreme Sentinency) at most of the places writes Hazur Saheb." The same is the case with the words viz. Hari, Jādavarāya, Govinda, Gopāla etc. The words which suggest the mind are viz. *maccha*, *māñcha*, *mīṭha*, *julāhā*, *sāuja*, *siyāra*, *rojha*, *hasti*, *mataṅga*, nirmjana etc. Moreover, the words viz. *putra*, *pāratha*, *julāhā*, *dulahā*, siṃha, māsa, bhaṅvarā, *yogī* etc. suggest the individual soul. The words

which suggest *Māyā* and *māta*, *nārī*, *cerī*, *gaiyā*, *bilaiyā* and others. The words *sāyara*, *bana*, *śikaṣā* and the like suggest the wordly life (*Saṁsāra*). The human body is suggested by the words *yauvana*, *divasa*, *dina* and the like while the code words such as *Sakhi*, *sahelarī* and the like suggest the organs of senses. All such words are not liste here because of the shortage of space. The words—1. 'Haṁsa Kabīra', 2. 'Kahahiṃ Kabīra', 3. 'Kahai Kabīra', 4. 'Kabīra' 5. 'Dāsa Kabīra' 6. 'Kabīrā' and 7. Kabīrana'—employed in the present work, 'the *Bījak*', also convey a special sense. This spceial sense becomes known through the regular succession of the preceptors and disciples (*guru-paramparā*). The correct knowledge of the meaning of the *Bījak* depends only on these code words. The first code suggests a liberated soul, the second one suggests that they are the words of the preceptor (*Kabīr Sāheb*), the third as well as fourth suggest 'anyokti' i.e. the reproduction of the words of others, the fifth suggests the worshippers of that God who resides in a special region and the sixth as well as the seventh suggest those who are devoted to actions, those who are ignorant and those preceptors who deceive the people. It is a matter of regret that the critics of the preceptor Kabīr Sāheb as well as of his works like the Bījak have committed mistakes at every step on the analogy of a blind man led by another blind man and by faltering at every step. This is the result of the ignorance of the coses on the part of the critics. Consequently, critic interpretes the world 'Kabīrana' as 'Kabīr-panthi' (i.e. a follower of the Sect of Kabīr) while some other critics interpret the word 'Julahā, Dāsa Kabīr's as 'Kabīr, the weaver'. In the same way, they have given the wilful interpretations of the words such '*Kabīr*' and the like. Well, the real understanding cannot be otabined without the guidance of one who has deep insight into it. "A thing is at a particular place, one looks for it elsewhere. Kabīr Sāheb points out that one attains a thing he desires only when one has the guidance of one who has deep insight into it".[26] *At some places Kabir has mentioned himself as Kori, but Brahmin editors and scholars have very often used the Julaha word and created much confusion. Actually some Brahmins changed "Kahe Kabira Kori" to "Kahe Kabir Julaha", to prove him low caste Muslim.*

Kabīr Sāheb And His Works

"Masi, Kagad chhuyo nahin,
kalam gahi nahi hath"

* * *

"Dhai akshar prem ke
padhe so pandit hoi"

'This was the feeling of Kabīr Saheb. He never wrote. Never touched any ink or paper and took pen in his hand.' For him a learned man is who reads the language of love (love to God)."

"Kabīr Sāheb himself has not written anything as he himself admits. Was he illiterate? "I did not touch the ink the paper. I never handled a writing pen. I have conveyed orally all the things which are useful for all the four Ages"—(Bījak : Sākhī 187). It is an agreed fact that Kabīr Sāheb taught and preached orally. His teachings and preachings have been recorded in the form of the Sabad or Vanis by his disciples. There are several works like 'the *Akharāvati*' which are the collections of the sayings (teachings and preachings) of the real preceptor, Kabīr Sāheb. This is already known to those who know the history of the Kabīr Sect. Those, who argue that the sayings, i.e. teaching and preachings of Kabīr Sāheb are only as many as they are found in the extant *Bījak* do not know the inner meaning of the words.[27]

Kabīr's Rhetoric

Linda Hess who had analysed and appreciated Kabīr's poetry as unique among the *bhakti* poets. Kabīr as *nirguṅa bhakti* poet has no doubt attracted the attention of western scholars for quite some time. Though his poetry is mystical but it is simple, full of teachings and reformative flavour. A slave and exploited India, religiously and socially divided but culturally united has appreciated Kabīr's poetry; and every one finds a special message for himself and interprets his mystic thought in his own way.

Linda Hess, in her translation in English of the *Bījak* of Kabīr, rejects the theory of Kabīr's Hindū origin in it's introduction like Vaudeville.

Kabīr is presented as a synthesizer of Hinduism and Islam, as some Indian historians and litterateurs have assumed in their early writings.

Hess has opined that during the medieval age low caste were half *Hindū* and half Muslim, specially the artisans and craftsmen. They easily and comfortably converted en-masse to the religion of the conquerors. Undoubtedly these people were oppressed by

the dominating Hindū castes and treated as inferior. But how one can be sure and certain whether Kabīr was a half Hindū and half Muslim just by reading his poetry where both Julāhā and Korī words have been used by the poet for his caste.

According to our reserach and knowledge most of the Hindū *Kori* (*Koli*) weavers in western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan never embraced Islam whether partially or en-masse during the Muslim rule, and remembered and respected Kabīr as their pathfinder. In some pockets few may have opted for Islam. However in Banaras and Gorokhpur, being the eastern side of Uttar Pradesh some Kori weavers might have converted themselves to Islam, because of *Hindū* orthodoxy and caste hierarchy resulting in atrocities and illtreatment. Koris and Momin Ansars of these places still have cordial relations with each other and felt they belong to one race, one family because of their ancestral weaving profession. Generally Muslim weavers are now called Julaha or *Ansari*, however in ceartain parts of northern India Hindū Julaha caste is certainly Kori (Koli) community, now in the S/C list.

Leaving this controversy here, we are concentrating on Linda Hess's literary appreciation of Kabīr's poetry, which is a symbolic resistance to counter Brahmanic dominance as well as a channel of right to worship of God through poetic vanis and devotional songs in remembrance. Kabīr paid greater attention to the ideological aspects of his reformative teachings, besides spiritual and mystic thought in his poetry. It is a mixture of spiritualism and radicalism. Cultural synthesis and reformation.

Kabīr has glorified *Purāṇic* figures in his poetry and expressed full faith in *nirguṅa Brahma* (formless God) who has helped his devotees in distress. His poetry is full of reformative and radical ideology of universal brotherhood, secularism and communal harmony. The orthodox Hindū society of his time did not appreciate his liberal and universal outlook, his large heartedness and advocacy of ritual free worship.

Linda Hess has peeped into the poetry of Kabīr to search the ideological base, the greatness of his true devotion to god, his universalism, his style of presentation and effectiveness of the language used by him.

Holding the banner of social-cultural revolt in his hands, Kabīr was always with the so called proletariat, the working class, as a true comrade for establishing a new social order :

When foreign writers like Hess study an illiterate, Kori weaver mystic poet Kabīr in totality it becomes a matter of great pride to the East which produced such a spiritual and social force who has the capacity to show the right path and light to the millions of people living in ignorance and darkness; besides ability to teach the elite the lesson of universality and freedom from social-religious barriers. His advocasy of a casteless society is remarkable. Linda Hess analyses :

"In his mastery of the vocative, Kabīr is unique among the *bhakti* poets. Not in the *saguṇa* devotees, not in *nirguṇa* Dādū or reformer *Nānak*, not in the radical Bengali Buddhist poets, the iconoclast Gorakh or the surreal Bauls, whetever else they may have in common with him, do we find the intense bearing down upon the listener that is so prominent in Kabīr. It shows itself first in the array of addresses he uses to seize our attention : Hey Saint, Brother, Brāhmaṇ, Paṇḍita, Yogi, Hermit, Babu, Mother, Muslim, Creature, Friend, Fool! Many poems are simply directed at 'you'. But titles or pronouns of address are only the beginning. Kabīr pounds away with questions, prods with riddles, stirs with challenges, shocks with insults, disorients one could hardly help getting red in the face, jumping around, squirming, searching, getting embarrassed, or shouting back.

For a taste of the style here are few lines from various poems :

Paṇḍit, you've got it wrong.
Monk, stop scattering your mind.
Paṇḍit, do some research
and let me know
how to destroy transiency.

Now you, Mr. Qazi, what kind of work is that,
going from house to house
chopping heads?
Who told you to swing the knife?

Pandit, think
before you drink
that water!
Think! Think! Figure it out!

Saints and reverences—
Morons and mindless fools—
Enchanted madman—
Look in your heart!
You simple-minded people..."

So Kabir is so bold, so fearless, his questioning so wonderful. Hess says : ''The vocative sabotages passivity. If someone shoots you a question, you immediately look for an answer. If someone sneaks behind your chair and whispers, "Why are you slouched over?", before thinking about it you will straighten your back. If someone calls you a lunatic you amy be angered or amused, but you will certainly be interested. Addressed affectionately, you will soften and begin to trust—which may just prepare the way for a new, unexpected blow.

The vocative creates intimacy. "Where did two gods come from?" might be a good opening to a polemical poem. But how different the effect when he says, "Brother, where did your two gods come from? Tell me, who made you mad?" (*Sabda* 30). The vocative draws the readers, as participant, into highly charged dialogues :

Saints, once you wake up don't doze off. (*Sabda* 2)
Pandit...
tell me where untouchability
came from, since you believe in it. (*Sabda* 41)

Sometimes an intimate address turn out to be a brazen trick : "Where are you going alone, my friend?" the poet begins softly in *Sabda* 99. A few lines later we realize that he is addressing a corpse.

The address may become so aggressive that it must be called an assault, complete with abuses that no decorum moderates :

You go around bent! bent! bent!
Your ten doors are full of hell, you smell
like a fleet of scents, your cracked
eyes don't see the heart, you haven't
an ounce of sense.
Drunk with anger, hunger, sex,
you drown without water. (*Śabda* 72)

In one shocking opener Kabīr calls his listener the 'son of a slut! Then stepping out from behind this attention-getter, he proceeds with his poem :

> Son of a slut!
> There : I've insulted you.
> Think about getting on the good road..." (*Śabda* 102)

So this is the voice of Kabir : way of addressing, convincing. A new forceful style hardly used by any mystic poet. Hess writes further : "Kabīr's provacations often taken the form of questions, skillfully inserted to ruffle us up or draw us out. Questions are used in a variety of ways—in opening or conclusions, singly or in series, as bait or goad, as funnel to point our inquiry. Sometimes a single question comes like a sudden jab : "When the pot falls apart, what do you call it?" (*Sabda* 75). The jab may be just a setup : when we rise to it, a hard Slap may hit us from another direction. Sometimes questions are shot in rapid series, like blows from a boxer, left, right, left right. When they end we may find ourselves staggering :

> Who's whose husband? Who's whose wife?
> Death's gaze spreads—untellable story.
> Who's whose father? Who's whose son?
> Who suffers? Who dies? (*Śabda* 36)

> If God wanted circumcision,
> why didn't you come out cut?
> If circumcision makes you a Muslim,
> what do you call your women?...
> If putting on the thread makes you Brahman,
> what does the wife put on?
> That Śūdra's touching your food, paṇḍit!
> How can you eat it?
> Hindu, Muslim—where did they come from?
> Who started this road?
> Look in your heart, send out scouts:
> where is heaven ? (*Śabda* 84)

Hess points out : In quieter poems questions are a way of approaching an experience that is not accessible to direct statement. In certain cases questions seem to open a space at the end of a

poem that is wide and silent (*Śabda* 67, discussed at the end of this paper; and *Ramainī* 7).

The intimacy created by Kabīr's style is not always obvious or entirely conscious, because the audience would often prefer not to identify with his addressees. As readers or listeners, we are more inclined to identify with Kabīr. When he conjures up a comic paṇḍit, we laugh. When he exposes the greedy and hypocritical, we scorn. When he reveals the incredible blindness of people who won't face death, we appluad. The use of stock characters allows us to maintain a sense of detachment. We know what a Brāhmaṇ priest looks like : he has a shaved head, paints marks on his forehead, dressed in a white pleated loincloth, counts his beads, and sits among his paraphernalia of brass trays, sandalwood paste, scriptures and bells, squeezing coins out of hapless pilgrims. A *Yogi* wears a patchwork cloak and drinks out of a cup made from a skull. A merchant sits amid his wares in the bazaar and holds up his scales, two round plates suspended from strings. These are not descriptions of *us*.

But gradually something begins to gnaw at our consciousness. It occurs to us that *paṇḍits* can wear other costumes besides the white *dhotī* and rosary of *tulsī* or *rudrākṣa* beads, can sit under other umbrellas than those that front the Gaṅgā at Vārānāsī. It is relatively easy to notice panditry in the universities, violence in government, greed in the market place, phoniness in religion. Then we can spot singnals closer at hands, in the gestures and voices of our neighbours. But Kabīr's power is most tellingly revealed when his words reverberate in our own skulls, and we see the succession of disguises under which we live our daily lives :

> Dropped from the belly at birth,
> a man puts on his costumes
> and goes through his acts. (Ramaini 1)
> This is the style of Kabir. His unique radicalism. Exposure of reality."[28]

> His mastery over language. Command over ideas and message he is conveying.

Riddless and Surprises

Highly mystic and philosophical Kabir collects many riddles, selects from Vedas and Puranas and presents them wonderfully. Sometimes weaver his own mystical thoughts. Hess says :

"One set of formulas in Kabīr clusters around the word *acharaj*—surprise or amazing thing—and *adbhuta*—wonderful, marvellous, strange (for example, *Śabda* 5, 6, 46, 82, 101). Formula or not, the promise of amazement stirs up our interest and gives Kabīr a further chance to play with us :

> Saints, here's surprises for you.
> A son grabbed his mother
> while a crazy virgin fell for her father,
> dropped her husband but went
> to the in-laws.
> Think of that! (*Śabda* 6)

Related to the 'surprise' formula is the 'Who will believe it?' formula :

> Who can I tell?
> And who will believe it?
> When the bee touches that flower,
> he dies. (*Śabda* 63)

The opening questions are teasers, designed to make the reader volunteer, "Tell *me*. I'll believe it!" The sudden injection of "that flower"* again elicits a curious response—"what flower?"—and the poet is set up for his main exposition :

> In the middle of the sky's temple
> blooms a flower...

The poem could easily have begun at this point. But the experience is quite different when it begins with the rhetorical questions and the dramatic introduction of flower and bee.

Sometimes 'suprise' and 'who will believe it?' are linked, and the interplay darts from line to line :

> Saints, a huge surprise :
> If I tell, who will believe it?
> Just one man, just one woman—
> imagine that! (*Śabda* 5)

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* The demonstrative pronoun ('that') does not appear in Hindī; but the effect is much the same, as Hindi syntax allows the sentence to begin with 'flower'. (Linda Hess)

From surprises and incredibilties it is a short step to the pure riddle. A number of poems are framed explicity at riddles :

Think, pandit, figure it out:
male of female? (*Śabda* 44)

What will you call the Pure?
Say, creature, how will you mutter the name
of one wihout hand or foot,
mouth, tongue or ear? (*Śabda* 94)

Sādhu, that Yogi is my guru
who can untie this song. (*Śabda* 24)

It there any guru in the world wise enough
to understand the upside-down Veda? (*Śabda* 111)

As the last example suggests, from the riddling poems it is just another small leap to *ulaṭbāṃsī*—the 'upside-down language' of paradoxes and enigmas which Kabīr inherited from the *Sahajīyas* and nāths and adapted to his own purposes :

The cow is sucking at the calf's teat,
from house to house the prey hunts,
the hunter hides. (*Śabda* 31)

Sprout without seed, branch without trunk,
fruit wihout flower, son born
of a sterile womb, climbing a tree
without legs... (*Śabda* 16)

It's pouring, pouring the thunder's roaring,
but not one raindrop falls...
frog and snake lie down together,
a cat gives birth to a dog,
the lion quakes in fear of the jackal—
these marvels can't be told." (*Śabda* 52)

Kabir is famous for upside down or ulatabamsi poetry. Much more mystic. "There is a great diversity in the interpretation of the *ulaṭābāṃsī* poems. It has been questioned whether they are authentic, whether their symbols have the same meaning in Kabīr

as in the Tāntric tradition, or whether they have any meaning at all. For the purpose of our brief rhetorical inquiry it is enough to note that these poems fascinate while they perplex the reader, that the images stick in consciousness even when their meaning eludes the mind, initiating a dialogue not only between reader and poet, but between the reader and himself, which may go on for years. Riddles and their extension, the paradoxes and enigmas of *ulaṭbābaṃsī*, besides being effective rhetorical devices, are teaching devices, comparable to the Zen koan—a problem the student can't solve and can't escape, a matrix of verbal impossibilities in which a transparent truth lies hidden—or perhaps, as the *Ṛg-Vedic* hymns has it, does not.*"[29]

On the structure of his poetry, Hess further writes in an analytical manner : "It is hazardous to analyze a *pada* by Kabīr as if the structure had some kind of inevitablity. The same song might turn up in another collection in fragment, or with its stanzas reshuffled like a deck of cards. Still, certain principles of structure are apparent; once spotted, they can be recognized again and again. And many poems are clearly unified. They may consist of an extend metaphor, an unfolding argument, a dialogue between poet and audience, or a dramatic monologue. These structures reveal both how songs in general are organized for oral performance, and how Kabīr particulary organized his uttrances to produce the effect he wanted to produce.

Several typical pattern in Kabīr depends on repetition with variation. Some poems comprise a series of negations whose syntax can be varied for pleasing effects in sound and rhythm (*Śabda* 43, *ramainī* 6). Some are built on anaphora—repetition of a word at the beginning of each line (*ramainīs* 3, 7; *śabda* 71). Or the repreated word may be scattered in different positions ('died' in *śabda* 45, 'look' in *śabda* 104). The repeated element may be a grammatical structure, like the if-then clauses of *śabda* 40, 42, and 84, the parallel sentences of *śabda* 59, the jabbing questions of *Śabda* 98 and 84."

"Some poems are catalogues—of Viṣṇu's incarnations, famous sages, stereotyped fools (*śabda* 8, 12, 38). One trick of Kabīr's is to take a literary convention and turn it upside-down. Other poets

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* Refers to the closing of Rg Veda 10.129, a famous poem sometimes called "Hymn of Creation" in English. (Hess. See also Bijaka of Kabir)

use the '*ten-avatār*' sequence to glorify Viṣṇu's descents; Kabīr uses it to ridicule them (*Śabda* 8). The rainbird (*cātaka*) is normally presented as a touching symbol of longing and devotion. Kabīr conjures her up to point out her delusion (*Śabda* 71).

Undoubtedly, many poems are constucted as dialogues or monologues (for example, *Śabda* 103, 75, 62, 35). Sometimes a single figure is developed throughout a poem—the cow, the shawl, the swan, the jewel, the musical instrument, the flower, the *Yogi*, the con-man.* Sometimes a series of parallel examples will be brought together in a conclusion, much as a sonnet may in successive quartrains give illustrations that are summed up in the sestet may in successive quartrains give illustrations that are summed up in the sester or couplet (e.g., the dog, lion and elephant of *Śabda* 76).

Hess thinks that perhaps the most consistent structural device in the lyrics is that of the strong 'opener' and 'clincher' lines that keep Kabīr rhetorically in control. We have seen how proficient he is at seizing the audience's attention with intriguing, challenging, shocking addresses at the beginning. He is just as adept at twisting our noses at the end, summing up the poem in a peculiarly powerful way, turning things around unexpectedly, making a wry comment, or jamming on the brakes with a suddenness that sends us hurtling forward into the darkness.**

A simple example of Kabīr's effectiveness his song with rhetorical devices at beginning and end may be seen in *Śabda* 43—a straightforward catalogue of negatives stating, in *Upaniṣadic* fashion, what the experience of truth is not :

> There's no creation or creator there,
> no gross or fine, no wind or fire,
> no sun, moon, earth or water,
> no radiant form, no time there,
> no word, no flesh, no faith,
> no cuase and effect, nor any thought
>
> of the Veda. No Hari or *Brahma*,
> no Śiva or Śakti, no pilgrimage

* These figures are found, respectively, in Śabdas 28, 81, 34, 7, 69, 63, 65, and

** A good example is Śabda 75.

and no rituals. No mother, father
or guru there...

According to Hess the poem is musical and memorable, with the repetitious pattern finaly modulated to avoid monotony. The whole piece could have been done in this style. But Kabīr has another way. Characteristically, he opens with a sharp challenge : "Paṇḍit, you've got it wrong" (literally, "your ideas are false"). Before we know what the poem is about, there is an engagement. We picture a paṇḍit, Kabīr's antagonist. He's got something wrong. What is it? From here on all the negatives also call forth the preaching of the paṇḍit, who is fond of talking of creation, the elements, the heavenly bodies, *Vedas*, deities, *karma*, *dharma*. Behind the negatives is a shadowy foil who is being continually silenced just as the is about to open his mouth.

Sabad 41 provides a more complex example of a unified poem in which a single metaphor is devoloped to the point of allegory, and the poet plays certain tricks as he moves from opening to closing :

Paṇḍit, look in your heart for knowledge.
Tell me where untouchability
came from, since you believe in it.
Mix red juice, white juice and air—
a body bakes in a body.
As soon as the eight lotuses
are ready, it comes

into the world. Then what's
untouchable?
Eighty-four
hundred thousand vessels
decay into dust, while the potter
keeps slapping clay
on the wheel, and with a touch
cuts each one off.
We eat by touching, we wash
by touching, from a touch
the world was born.
So who's untouched? asks Kabīr.

Only he
who has no taint of *māyā*[30]

* * *

Kabir's poetry is much radical :
It's a heavy confusion.
Veda, Koran, holiness, hell—who's man? who's woman?
A clay pot shot with air and sperm.
When the pot falls apart, what do you call it?
Numskull! You've missed the point. *(Sabda 75)*

The diction as well as the structure is bruising; it *hurts*, it is designed to *break* something.

It's all one skin and bone
one piss and shit,
one blood, one meat.
From one drop, a universe.
Who's Brāhmaṇa? Who's Śūdra?

In the words of Linda Hess further this is not argument, but a direct assault on the structures of belief and self-image. The point that is being hammered across reaches its culmination in "From one drop, a universe" (reminiscent of "From a touch the world was born"). The line has several levels of meaning. It suggests not only a universal substance of creation (which is rather a remote, abstract idea), but also an event or experience that breaks through time: creation is instantaneous, a single act fills the universe, a single thought fills consciousness. Not giving the reader a chance to catch his breath after this climax. Kabīr shoots another question: "Who's Brāhmaṇ, who's Śūdra?" The next verse may be temporarily comforting, for it is rote repetition of the Brāhmaṇic 'party line' about the three *guṇas* and their association with the three great gods :

Brahma *rajas*, Śiva *tamas*, Viśnu *sattva*...

But he has opened this line of thinking only to cut it off the more forcefully :

Kabīr says, plunge into Ram!
There : No Hindū. No Turk.

If you reduce the universe to a drop, then remove (or plunge into)

the drop, what do you have? Darkness. No distinctions.[31]

Hess quotes Stanley Fish and others to prove the richness, vitality and various facets of his poetry : He calls Kabir a good physician.

> Stanley Fish, in *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, describes an aesthetic which he traces originally to Plato and Augustine and demonstrates at length in the works of several seventeenth-century English authors.

Though Fish treats the metaophor of the good physician as "one of the most powerful in western literature and philosophy," the aesthetic he elaborates from it is universally applicable. Students of Kabīr will vividly recognize their poets in Fish's account of the verbal good physician, who is characterized (in terms based on Plato's *Gorgias*) as a 'dialectician' rather than a 'rhetorician':

> A dialectical presentation...is disturbing, for it requires of its readers a searching and rigorous scrutiny of everything they believe in and live by. It is didactic in a special sense; it does not only of a reader's opinions and values, but of his self-esteem.
>
> ...The good physician may be philosopher, minister, teacher, or even deity, but whatever his status, his strategy and intentions are always the same: he tells his patients what they *don't* want to hear in the hope that by forcing them to see themselves clearly, they will be moved to change them selves they see.

So Socrates asks in the *Gorgias :*

> To which treatment of the city do you urge me?...Is it to combat the Athenians until they become as virtuous as possible, prescribing for them like a physician; or is it to be their servant and cater to their pleasure...?

Fish comments that Socrates is here articulating the choice of motives that faces every would-be teachers, writer, or leader :

Hess opines that Kabīr's attitude is the same. He does not hesitate, in the holiest Hindū city, to attack the kingpins of Hindū society ("Seekers, the Brāhmaṇ is a slicked-down butcher"); or, in a country ruled by Muslim, to ridicule the religion of the Emperor (the Turk "crows 'God! God!' like a cock"). If someone tries to

smooth over his instults, saying "No offense," he will cry like Hamlet, "Yes, but there is, and much offense tool!" And he will continue to offend. Though he did not, like Socrates, have to die for his outrages, he does speak of being beaten for telling the truth, and he often alludes to his isolation, the difficulty of finding anyone who will listen or understand. His contant effort was to strip away disguises, force confrontations, expose lies, promote honesty at every level. His social-satirical poems, his psychological, probes, his poems about death, his crazy and paradoxical and "mystical" poems, do not inhabit separate categories. They are unifield by a principle of radical honesty that sweeps through marketplace, temple, body and mind, that will no more allow you to delude youself than to cheat other, to hcak up the truth than to sever the head of a animal.

Kabīr's abrupt and jagged style is a technique to jolt and shock people into facing things, to push them over the edge into an understanding that they fear and yet profoundly long for. It also corresponds to, and tones the mind up for, the actual experience of a sudden, unifying insight in the midst of chaotic temporal events.[32]

"Real Kabir is still to be discoverd. He is a great teacher and philosopher and through his vanis sometimes sarcastical and mystic preaches equality and faternity, unity and universalism, communal harmony and secularism. As a social reformer· he condemns untouchability and caste system and advocates the cause of the Sudras. He criticises Hindu fundamentalist and their highly objectionable ritualism, as well as Muslim orthodoxy, thier rojas (fasts) and way of Namaj (prayer). He was against animal sacrifice. He believed in formless-nirgunia God, who was the hope of the poor, depressed people, crushed by the priestly class. Muslim invasions have weakened the Indian Society and its masses, Kabir had united them through his vanis in simple-folk language. The artisans and cultivators became his followers. Guru Nanak and Sikh Gurus were highly influenced by his teaching and many Vaisnav Bhagats took inspiration from him. The language of his poetry is sometimes highly mystic, full of riddles.

Thus in a feudal and Brahmanical society enslaved and governed by the Muslim emperors Kabir through his poetic preachings vehemently opposed Hindu-Muslim hypocrisy, ritualistic stupidity, violence, greed and savagery. He himself was a movement and neither the priests nor the Muslim rulers and Kazis

could stop his voice to spread. He might have got complete support from weavers, village artisans, peasents and farm labour who as his followers were the strong backbone of his radical reformatory struggle. He was undoubtedly the creation of the rotten society around him,[33] requiring transformation and rejuvenation. It was sagacious Kabir who took up the challenge and exposed the religious imposters.

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11

RADICALISM AND STRENGTH OF LANGUAGE

Kabīr is radical in his thought, a great visionary and reformer. He writes and sings as a seeker of absolute truth. With full faith in *nirguṇa Brahma* (formless God), he preaches as an ancient sage that God is within one's soul. And this is the strength of Kabir. This is his religion, his philosophy.

He speaks in the language of the ordinary man. His language is very simple, commonly used and understood by the masses. It has not changed as yet being a dialect of the people of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. It contains expressions of sufferings and ignorance of the people and their exploitation in the hands of the feudals and Brahmins since ages in the name of Religion.

His simple language has deep meaning; and his mystical poetry has become more powerful than scriptures.

His every poem is quotable and recitable in daily prayers, in people's assemblies, in happiness and even when one is in trouble. This is the real strength of his mystic and philosophical poetry.[1] As Ezekiel observes :

"No Indian saint has displayed such strength of language, such vitality, such ruggedness and down-to-earth assertion of facts and views as the weaver Saint of Benares. This serene and saintly personality breathes scorns and disgust, uses frowns and sneers, generates thunder and wrath—all so contrary to his inward peace and compassion towards erring humanity. They are his weapons; not part of his mental make-up.

Banter, ridicule, sarcasm, wit and humour—these are the weapons he wields! Nor does he hesitate to hit straight-for-the-shoulder, hitting hard ceaselessly and without stopping, till the face

of false piety and hypocrisy is battered out of shape and exposed to the view of the general public for general laughter.

He weaves his words wonderfully which hits. He laughs at the ritualistic way of the Hindus and the Muslims. He exposes the narrow vision of the pandits and the mullas through his sarcastical vanis.

He summons the entire zoo to portray human beings of diffrerent sorts. Donkeys and dogs, foxes and wolves, snakes and vipers, lions and tiger, fishes and fowls, Camels and elephants, cranes and herons, swine and scorpions—march before us as representations of human beings, who thus properly labelled, carry the labels wherever they go—for the labels stick so fast in the reader's mind that nothing can remove or destroy them.

Kabīr specialises in deflation—deflation of our mind, our ego. He deflates the higher and mighty and shows them their proper place both on this earth and in the nether worlds."[2]

He sings for peasants and landless labour. He teaches the low caste *Dalits* to be fearless, more courageous and united as every one is equal in the eyes of God, the almighty. The Social distinctions and caste divisions are but the creations of Brahmins he proves.

"Royalties and aristocracies, mighty mansions and magnificent places lies in dust before his withering banter. He punctures the pretensions of the pious, pierces holes in the learning of the learned, atrophies the ambitions of the wealthy, grinds to dust the pride of youth and beauty, files and chiesels the wrath of the haughty, crushes the showmanship of the *sādhus* and *faqūirs*, and diminishes the height of *yogis* and *yogeśwars*.

Above all, he is concerned with the ordinary man, the landless labourer and the hand-to-mouth peasant who toils from morn to night in sweltering heat and blistering cold, but does not have food enough to fill his empty stomach when alive, and cloth enough to cover his nakedness when dead.

He sees with his own eyes how long and how deeply the peasant suffers—suffers at the hands of his exploiters and at the hands of his spiritual leaders. He has nothing but compassion for the poor.

But mere compassion would not have abolished their spiritual subjection. And so he narrates interesting stories to expose what simpletons they are, and how they are fooled and humbugged by

the charlatans; defrauded and cheated by the guardian angles of temples; blinded and hood winked by cheats and thugs; bluffed and bamboozled by highwayment of the spiritual path.

These stories are very simple and naive, but very easy to understand and so easy to remember. The proud intellectual may not think much of them, but they remain in the mind and pierce the heart like an arrow.

They project the spiritual purpose of life; they pitch and toss the spritual idea that keeps working in the mind; they heave aside age-old traditions and unthinking submission to the past. In that sense Kabīr is a most daring modernist; and the modernist to today seems to be tattered and out-of-date before him.

Within the range of reasons, Kabīr is a most uncompromising rationalist. In the intellectual field, he is the most clear-brained intellectual. Among the learned—though he is ignorant of the alphabet. He quotes the Śastras, the *Purāṇas* and the *Vedas* with an authority before which the learned shiver and the traders in holy lore call for the hangman's rope.

His radicalism should be studied and understood in the light of the age be lived. That was the time when people were voiceless. Brahmins were silents feudal lords have sold themselves.

Kabīr's songs seek nobody's approbation. They seek no sanction, ask for no approval, search for no popularity, invite no commendation, crave no compliment. They stand independent of these considerations, and they constitute the most uninhibited literature, the freest of free writing ever produced by a saint. They are the most fearless of fearless hymns, for they launch assaults on the very foundations of institutional religion and the self-appointed customs officers of the gates of heaven."[3]

"Kabīr wields the scalpel and the forceps with the dexterity of a skilled surgeon. He manipulates the lancet and the knife with the facility of a specialist out to lay bare the putrefication within us. "Are you old and respectable?" he asks, and replies, "But your lustful hunger has sharpened, not diminished, with age, and hardly makes you worthy of respect." "Have you abondoned the world?" he asks, and replies, "But your mind clings to the wordly dross with rapacious greed and nauseating egotism."

He divests us of our affectation, uncovers our prudery, lays bare our charlatanism, undrapes our moral skeleton to expose its death-like ugliness, and he slits open our skin-deep beauty to reveal

the sores within.

The most daring of Kabīr's songs are those that uncover the true nature of the gods and goddesses we worship.

"Who are these gods?" he asks, and replies that "their prime purpose is to keep us away from the Lord, and you go to them for salvation." "Who are these gods?" he asks again, and quotes the Purāṇas to prove their many delinquencies. He recalls the stories of their hysterical fits of temper unworthy of any cultured gentleman: their cunning devices of greed that surpass the records of fraudulent company promoters and practised racketeers; their unquenchable ego that would put to shame dictators and 'conquerors of the world'; their crimes of lust—kidnapping, adultery, fornication, rape, incest—crimes that would rock a civilised society if committed by men at the top crimes that would invite heavy sentences of imprisonment if committed by any ordinary mortal and condemn him for life as unworthy of decent company, writes Ezekiel so bravely."[4]

"How can these gods, themselves wallowing in passions, free you from their fury?" he asks. "How can these gods, themselves submerged in suffering, redeem you from its anguish? How can these gods, themselves beset with gnawing anxiety, liberate you from its distractions? How can these gods, themselves encompossed by fear, release you from its stranglehold? How can these gods, bound hands and feet to duality, free you from illusion? How can these gods, themselves entangled in transmigration, deliver you from the Eternal Wheel?" So this was the radicalism of Kabir.

Kabīr uses the language of the common man, simple, direct, terse, pithy Metaphors and similes drawn from the life of the villagers, pour out with an ease and beauty that amaze the reader. His simple figures of speech carry conviction where pages of argument would be unconvincing, the precision with which he conveys profound ideas and the simplicity with which he propounds the eternal truth remain the crowing glory of Indian *bhakti* (devotional) literature. His plays on words and elliptical structures are such as only disciples of mystics can understand.

The *Bījak* constitute the most authentic works of Kabīr. They are written in Eastern Uttar Pradesh Hindī, for he himself writes, "My speech is of the East." It is a dialect of *Hindī* somewhat different from the *Hindī* used in Western Uttar Pradesh, Bihar or Rajasthan. The name Bījak needs explanation.

A practice prevailed during Kabīr's days of burying gold and silver and other valuables in some secret place which was not known to anybody except the master of the house. A chart of how to locate the place was made, sealed and handed over to the inheritor of the tresure. The chart itself was made in a mysterious language which only some members of the family could unravel. This chart was know as a '*Bījak*' The *Bījaks* of Kabīra are, therefore, a document which discloses the way to spiritual treasure only to those initiated. '*Bījak*' also means essence or invoice, and Kabīr's Bijaks are an essence or invoice of spiritual teachings."

Kabīr has enriched his language by taking words from other contemporary language due to socio-religious interaction.

"Kabīr's poems contain a number of words of Arabic and Turkish origin; words which were current in those days He also uses some words and phrases which only the common man from Benaras and surrounding areas can appreciate. He is no purist and in concerned only with driving his teachings home.

Kabīr himself did not write a single line. He was utterly illiterate and says, "I have never touched ink to paper". All his songs were written down by his immediate followers, some during his life-time, and many a little later. He resorted to the poetical form of expression whenever any question on a spiritual subject was put to him. This method was more effective than an explanation in prose. The rhythm and terseness of the language made it easier to remember the teachings, so concise, so simple and so clear.

Kabīr's poetical collection runs into some thousands of verses. Yet he was not a poet in the ordinary sense of the word. He did not sit down to compose his poems. They were *extempore* expositions. Nor was he bound by any poetical technique. He invented his own meter, or rather a variety of metres, each suited to the occasion. To give first importance to him as a poet and second to his teachings is to mistake the means for the end."[5]

The strength of his language is everlasting. The impact of his songs is eternal. Their appeal is heart searching. As Ezekiel writes further :

"Kabīr was pioneer in using Hindī, instead of *Sanskṛit*, for conveying spiritual knowledge. In doing so, he and other saints of the time had to face fierce opposition. Just as in medieval Europe, Latin was the Church language and Latin the laugnage of

spiritual books, so in India we were wedded to Sanskṛit. Just as the prayers and services were conducted in Latin in Roman Catholic churches, so was *Sanskṛit* used in India. And just as the Protestant Church had to wage a struggle to introduce the national languages of various countries for spiritual books and prayers, so also had medieval Indian Saints to face opposition in introducing the use of regional languages. But Kabīr was no anti-Sanskṛitist. It was all a matter of taking a practical view of things. The masses did not know Sanskṛit; nor did he. It was purely the language of priestly class.

The exact texts of the *Bījakas* vary from region to region. This needs to be explained. No printing presses then existed and every copy of the *Bījakas* had to be written by hand. As a result, copyist of the *Bījakas* in Western Uttar Pradesh, the Punjab, Rajasthan and Bihar have sometimes replaced orginal words with their own regional words, but these copies are faithful to the original in maintaining the meaning the purpose of the songs. These changes are verbal and none had resroted to distortion.

There are copies of Bijakas that belong to another category. As has happened in the case of all medieval Indian saints, a number of forged songs composed long after Kabīr had passed away are also to be found; but their language is different and they propound thoughts and ideas contrary to the teachings of Kabīr.

Many songs are also composed by genuine disciples of Kabīr in the name of their Master and are consistent with his teachings. This is done out of sheer love for the Master; but their language is somewhat different and more modern, and Kabīr's terseness and figures of speech are either not found in them at all or are far less effective. These can be easily distinguished from the original poems.

The practice of disciples writing in the name of their Master is by no means rare. Everything that a good disciple does is done in the name of his Master. The poems written by the successors of *Guru* Nānak and included in the Grantha Sāhib are written in the name of *Guru* Nānak. These cannot be called forgeries. They are the product of love for *Guru Nānak*, with whom succeding *Gurus* had completely identified themselves."[6]

Further Ezekiel points out : "The geniune poems of Kabīr can be distinguished from the real forgeries by the fact that:

1. Kabīr condemns idolatry, ascetism, rituals and outward forms

of worship as useless for salvation.

2. Kabīr emphasises the need for a *guru* to pursue the higher path, and gives fixed and unalterable qualifications of a *guru.*

3. Kabīr opposes the caste system and never speaks of the Brahmins or any other caste as especially holy.

4. Kabīr does not accept the *Vedas* and the *Quran* as the highest revelations.

5. Kabīr stands for complete vegetarianism and against the use of drugs and drinks.

Many illiterate sadhus, saints, artisans and farmers till now recite vanis or padas of Kabir. But meaning is there.

Any poems not consistent with these teachings can be easily classed as the works of someone other than Kabīr.

In this respect Kabīr is lucky. He has largely escaped from the forgeries that go contrary to his teachings. Many other saints have been less fortunate. In the name of Tukārām, for example, poems have been composed in which the caste system and the Brahmins, rites and rituals and outward forms of worship are lauded to the sky and sometimes placed in close juxtaposition with poems condemning all these. Obviously, they are shamless and unscrupulous forgeries committed by supporters of religious vested interests."[7]

On the authenticity of Kabīr's works Ezekiel quotes Rev. Keay that Bijakas are more authoritative, preserved in the Kabīramathas in the manuscript form. As Ezekiel says :

"The Rev. F.E. Keay considers that the collection of Kabīr's poems in the *Granth Sāhib* are not "so authoritative as those in the Bījakas", but he himself in practice refutes the idea by quoting mostly from the *Granth Sāhib* in his chapter on "Historical Kabīr", and from other sources in the chapter on "Lengendary Kabīr". The collection of Kabīr's poems in the *Granth Sāhib* may have in some cases, local words to suit the Punjabi readers, but there can be no doubt about their genuines. They have been incorporated in the *Granth Sāhib* by perfect Masters themselves. The Rev. Keay himself says, "The language and spirit of the two collections (in the Granth Sāhib and in the *Bījak*) are the same, and there seems no reason to doubt that they both contain a large majority of poems which are the genuine works of Kabīr."[8]

The collection in Kabir's Bījak is undoubtedly authentic. Most writers are agreed on the point.

To return to the literary style, the directness and vigour with which Kabīr expounds unorthodox views may be illustrated with a few examples. Emphasising that even gods such as *Brāhmā*, *Viṣṇu* and Śiva are not free from the group of *Māyā* (illusion) and passions, Kabīr writes :

> The woman (*Māyā*) hath conquered the three worlds;
> She hath made the eighteen *Purāṇas*
> And the places of pilgrimage love her;
> She hath pierced the heart of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva,
> And infatuated great kings and sovereigns.

Condemning wealth and pride and physical beauty, Kabīr writes :

> The limbs that are anointed
> With ground aloe-wood, sandal and fragrant soap,
> Shall be burnt with wood.
> What is there to be proud of in this body and in wealth?

In a single sweep Kabīr smashes the whole lot of devotional devices of Hindūsm and condemns the *Vedas* and the Quran as "Cloaks of falsehood". No modernist has dared to classify the Vedas and the Quran thus:

> Ceremonial devotion, sacrifice and rosary,
> Piety, pilgrimage, fasting and alms,
> The nine *bhaktis* (devotions), the *Vedas*, the Book (the Quran)—
>
> All these are cloaks of falsehood.
>
> If union with God be obtained by going about naked,
> All the beasts of the forest should be saved.
> If perfection be obtained by shaving the head,
> Why should not sheep obtain salvation ?
>
> Kabīr says: Hear, O my brethren,
> Who hath obtained salvation without the Name of God ?

Kabīr declares that even *Brahmā*, Viṣṇu and Śiva are not free from transmigration :

> Who of men did not die ?
> O pandit, speak and make this plain to me;

Dead is Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa;
Dead is Ganesh, the son of Pārvatī;
Dead is Kriṣṇa, dead is the Maker (Kal);
Only one did not die—the Lord.
Kabīr says, He alone dies not,
Who is not held fast in coming and going (transmigration).

The Vedas, the Smṛtis, the Purāṇas (three Hindū scriptures) are exposed in a single, short verse as works that know nothing of the Supreme Lord :

Indra and Brahmā know not thy attributes;
The four vedas, the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas,
Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī know them not.

—*Kabīr Granth*

The Brahmins are denounced in language that they cannot easily forget:

If birth from a Brahmin makes you Brahmin,
Why did you not come another way ?
If birth from a Turk makes you a Turk,
Why were you not circumcised in the womb ?

It is quite a widespread practice in India to keep repeating "Rāma, Rāma" as devotional device for salvation. Kabīr reveals its ineffectiveness in a single, short verse by a simple comparison. Can one's mouth be sweetened, he asks, by repreating the word "sugar"? The true mystic "Name" of God or "Rāma nama" is something totally different from the mere repetition of "Rāma, Rāma". How that devotion is to be done is indicate in the second verse below :

If by merely repreating "Rāma", the world is saved,
Then indeed by merely repeating 'sugar', the mouth is sweetened.

The path of salvation lies through the body, to be pursued by devotion to the divine Word :

Maked thy body the churn, thy heart
the churning staff;
Into the churn put the Word instead of milk.
(What the Word means will be discussed at a later stage.)"[9]

"Kabir always makes direct approach to the subject and discards abstractions and speculation as utter nonsense. He was not, as imagined by some, a vedāntist, nor a Vaiṣṇavaite, nor a pantheist, nor yet a transcendentalist. He was not influenced by Persian or Arabian mystics. He stood independent of them all, and he certainly never sought to reconcile "the intense and personal mysticism of Islam with the traditional theology of Brahminism". There is not a word in his *Bījak* to support the theory that he sought to bring Hinduism and Islam together in any ordinary, social or political sense of the word.

Nor are his *Bījak* an attempt to bring about a compromise between "the smplicity of Islamic practice and the complications of Brahminical ceremonialism". He was not concerned with either.

It is also fantastic to imagine that he was influenced by Christian thought or teachings. Saints may quote any other saints and scriptures and use them for driving their message home to their followers, but they do not have to learn their message from books, They teach what they have seen with their own spiritual eyes.

The teachings of all saints are the same in all essentials. They are not derived from scriptures, but from direct knowledge of the higher path and the ways and means to traverse it. They can write their own scriptures.

Kabīr was not "essentially a poet and a musician." Speaking in poetical form was an incidental part of his work, and it is doubtful that he ever sang his songs.

However great and original his poems—and about their grandeur and beauty there can be no dispute—and however soul-stirring the tunes to which subsequent musicians have set his songs, we must never forget that his poems were only a means. Their end always was to call upon the reader to search for a perfect master and thus go back home to his Heavenly Father.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the *bhakti* or devotional school of spiritual practice, of which Kabīr was such an outstanding champion, was not the product of the Ismalmic impact on Hinduism. Perfect Master explain over and over again that the *bhakti mārg* (devotional path) for God-realisation came into being along with the creation of the world, and always and ever there is at least one perfect Master on this earth to show seekers the homeward path. Kabīr's poems are great because they are the product

of a *param sant satguru* pointing to the homeward path. Their literary style, however, fascinating, is of secondary importance.

Now the end was approaching. Kabīr had become old and weary. His every muscle and sinew had been worn out in the service of the Lord. He had defied the religious practices of entire classes and masses, and exposed to ridicule the credulity of a society riddled with religious charlatanism. He had fought presumptions and notions from which their adherents hoped to gain solace here and happiness beyond, but which in reality subjected them to fear and fraud here and wretchedness and misery beyond. And now Kabīr decided to deliver his last blow at superstition and use his very death to open the eyes of the blind.

Banaras is holy city. If you die there, it is said that you go straight to heaven. Even if you have never remembered your creator all your life; even if you have spent your years in vice and degradation; even if you have ill-treated and tourtured the parents who brought you up when you were so helpless; even if you come homes soaked in drink and beat your helpless wife and children; even if you have been a cheat and a fraud all your life; even if you have exploited the poor, swindled widows and orphans, misled youth and committed adultery, the golden gates of heaven will open wide before you if you can only manage to go to Benaras and die there. That was one aspect of the popular gullibility of Kabīr's time.

On the other hand, it is said that even if you lead a disciplined and virtuous life; even if you are noble-hearted and charitably disposed; even if chastity be your watch word and honesty your guiding principle; even if your heart melts at the wretchedness; and misery of widows and orphans; even if you subject yourself to self-denial for the love of others; even if you stand for justice to the downtrodden and righteousness towards all; even if you fight against oppression and injustice; even if you spend all your strength in searching for the Lord; even if you reach the feet of a saint; even if you are a saint of the stature of a *param sant satguru* such as Kabīr Sāhib, you will have to be born again and as a donkey if you die at a village called Maghar, which is 240 kilometers away from Banaras. Could there be any greater nonsense than this ? And yet millions of people seriously believed in it during the days of Kabīr.

Kabīr gave a heavy blow to this delusion by setting a personal example of defiance.

When Kabīr saw his end approaching, he packed up his belongings and started for Maghar—of all places in the world.

People around him his friends and associates, the crowds that used to hear him denouncing bigotry day after day, now rose up as one man to oppose Kabīr. They warned him; they raised a great protest; they cried and wept that their beloved Teacher should become so 'perverted' as to resort to such a shocking act of degradation.

Why did they behave so? Was all of Kabīr's half-century long instruction washed away like water falling off a duck's back? Did they take his 'opinions' with a pinch of salt? Did they accept his 'advice' with mental reservations ?

They may have tought to themselves this way: After all, Kabīr is a great saint, and saints are strange people. They have strange view on life; and those view may be tolerated and their 'errors' connived at, for after all they are 'God men', and so on.

If a God man gives expression to outlandish views, the people of Kabīr's time thought that they should tolerate them. If Kabīr says that the waters of the Ganges are nor more holy than the waters of any other river; if he says that Benaras is no more holy than any other city; that circumcisions and thread ceremonies, caste-marks, shaven heads and idol-worships, are not of genuine spiritual importance—well, he may be heard with due respect, but his view may be quietly ignored. After all, Kabīr is not a 'practical man', and we are all such practical people. And as practical people, we must continue to go to Benares, dip into the Ganges, perform the Thread Ceremony, continue idle-worship, and do our devotion to the very gods whom Kabīr denounced all his life. After all, who is going to bear the consequences if we abandon the beaten path—surely we, not Kabīr, so let us stick to the dear old road."[10]

"Those people could not understand that Kabīr was not merely expressing some 'views' and 'opinions', or propounding some 'theories' and 'dogmas'. He was revealing what he had seen with his own eyes. There should have been no 'mental reservation', no 'pinch of salt'. If there were any doubts, that great Saint was every ready to explain. But we seem to have got into the habit of paying outward respect to saints, while we continue to remain attached to worn-out dogmas and delusions.

Whatever the case may be, Kabīr argued and discussed the matter with his associated and said :

Say, O Rāma, what is now my state ?
People tell me I had little sense to leave Banaraś.
My whole life was spent in Śivpurī (Benares).
At the time of death I have risen and come to Maghar.

If the hard-harted one dies at Benares,
he is not saved from hell.
If the Saints of *Hari* dies at Haramba,
he saves his whole relationshp.
If Kabīr leaves his body at Benares,
what obligation is he under to God?
Saith Kabīr: Hear, O people, let no one
make a mistake;
What difference is there between Benares and the barren Maghar, If God be in the heart?

But Kabīr defied the crowd as he had defied more powerful crows, and set out for Maghar. Here he lived in a sādhu's hut for some days and when the time for bidding good-bye arrived, he asked his associates to leave the room. A few hours later when they came back, he was no more.

A dispute then arose as to who could claim the body. The Muslims wanted to bury his body, whereas the Hindūs insisted on cremating it. After the dispute had continued from some time it, was suggested that they should remove the shroud covering the body. They did so and to their amazement found a heap of flowers instead of a dead body. The flowers were then distributed equally among the Hindūs and the Muslims and both performed the last rites according to their own faith.

Thus passed away a great Indian saint. His teachings concerning all external forms of devotion and his condemnation of all credulity was so rational that he can be classed as a great rationalsit. For the matter of that, all perfect Masters hold the same rational view on these matters. Kabīr's personality stands out as one who waged a relentless war against irrationality and stupidity, againt men behaving like dumb-driven cattle following their blind leaders to the slaughter-house of death.

Even in his teachings of mysticism, Kabīr is very convincing. He speaks from personal experience when he talks of astral bodies and causal bodies, astral worlds and causal worlds; when he

discourses on millions of worlds and millions of heavens and hells, and millions of gods and goddesses. He does not want us to take him at his own word. He says. "Go in and see for yourself."

Further Ezekiel sums up in the following words : That was the crux of his teachings. That has been the crux of the teaching of all perfect Master in the past and of the perfect Masters at Beas in the Punjab today. They ask for no more blind faith than what we must have when we post a letter in a mail box, deposit money in a bank, or purchase a ticket to travel by train, sea or air. No work in this world can be done without an element of faith. No student can learn anything without faith in his teacher. We cannot take even our daily meals at home unless we have faith enough that our wives and servants are not out to poison us. For the rest, the teachings of Kabīr follow a strictly scientific path, with experiments carried on in the laboratory of the body under the supervision of a Master himself.

Kabīr sets a personal example in everything that he asks us to do. Though a born perfect Master, he became a disciple of a *guru*, and he asks us to do likewise. He practised no idol-worship, no rituals, no bathing in holy rivers—in the midst of fanatical orthodoxy, and he asks us to follow suit. He treated all castes, races and religions alike and ignored all difference, and he asks us to do nothing more. He did not recognise the authority of the *Vedas*, *Shastras* and *Purāṇas*—at a time when the authority of these books stood unchanllenged—and he asks us to show similar courage. He declares that the *avatārs* were no saviours of mankind—at a time when none dared question their authority—and he asks us to look for saviours elsewhere. He searched for God within his own body and found Him, and he asks us to pursue the same easy road.

For the rest, all the singing of the songs of Kabīr on the battlefields of three continents, in the many military cantonments of India and in the thousands of India's villages, in the vast Gangetic plains, under the shadows of the Himālyas and the southern mountains, has little meaning unless we put Kabīr's teachings into practice by going to the lotus feet of a contemporary perfect Master and seek salvation through Him."[11] There is no doubt Ezekiel is more correct in his study than any Indian or European Scholar. There is nothing impressive and meaningful than Kabir-vanis. His verses guide us. Hundreds of Hindi scholars have done research

on Kabirian literature and obtained Ph.D.'s and D.Litt.'s and got promotions.

Kabīr's language is language of love and tolerance. It is peneterating. Rabindranath Tagore says that his Sabda, vani or poems are like hymns. His sayings (poems) are more mythical and more powerful than a '*mantra*' of any scripture. They lead to self-realisation, devotion to all powerful Supreme Being which is also within us. They expose the reality of world which is subject to decay. There is revolt against exploitation and caste distinctions, his is the voice of social transformation and equality.[12]

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12

DISCOVERY OF KABĪR : VOICE FROM MAURITIUS AND CANADA

1. World Teacher Kabir

In 1986, Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India told, the then Rae Bareli District Magistrate, Kalika Prasad, I.A.S. that in foreign countries only Tagore and Kabir are much known and respected. Kabir is read and studied in Russia, Europe and America. His vanis are recited world over in Sikh temples (Gurudwaras). He is a world teacher.

Disciple of Aurobindo, Sādhu Banamālī of Mauritius exposing Kabīr's philosopohy, as a world teacher writes :

"Saheb Kabīr is always entitled as *Sadguru* (True Teacher); but very often I do designate him with *Jagadguru and Amaraguru* (World-Teacher and Immortal Teacher) too, because Truth and Truth alone is immortal and can cover the whole world and be accepted by world-citizens sooner or later. Hence the True Teacher alone can be in the position of being called as *Jagadguru* in the strict sense of the world.

Below I give an exposition of the *Sadguru Saheb* Kabīr's immortal Sākhī (the couplet of Spiritual Experience), which will disclose how aptly he should be called as *Jagadguru* and *Amaraguru* :-

"I became attached with the One (All-Pervasive God) and That one manifests Himself through all. Now, all belongs to me and I belong to all. The feeling of otherness (duality) vanished away altogether (and that of Divine oneness is established for good)."

The content of the above couplet is not the product of a fanciful poet's mind, nor a logical conclusion of an arguing philosopher, nor a mental picture drawn by a scholar from his deep studies;

but of the perfect mystic's concrete and genuine realization, which is one of the highest and primary goals of the human life here. Wealth, power and sensual enjoyments are of secondary importance. At best, they can give transitory comforts, pleasure or mental satisfactions surely to be followed by undersiable reactions, but can never provide with an even, uniform and objectless bliss rightly called as *Nijānanda*, *Brahmānanda* or *Atmabuddhiprasāda* of the Gītā, that is, the delight from the knowledge of one's own Real Self, or the Spiritual Ecstasy of the divine Oneness.

His realizations of identity of the individual soul with all, through the medium of the All-Pervasive Being or the Omnipresent Gods, is the essence, rather quintessence of all Yogas Witness stage of the Sānkhya Philosophy, etc. etc., high ethics, real religions, true philosophy, pure spirituality, Isms and Hoods (Such as, Hindūism, Mohammadanism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Socialism, Communism, Nationalism, Internationalism, Humanitarianism, Idealism, Universal Brotherhood, Sisterhood etc., etc.) known or to be known in near or distant future. This cultivation of inner life and pure love for all creatures as a part and parcel of one's own self, gives a depth and a comprehensiveness to the life and the teaching of *Sadguru Saheb Kabīr*, which are very rarely to be met with. The experience which he out speaks in simple and unaffected words and simple style for the good and the spiritual welfare of others, radiates from him like light from a luminous body. He has neither borrowed the idea nor copied the style, but expressed spontaneously what he experienced as the fundamental truth in his own in-imitable way.

One of the highest reaches or stages or consciousness, which the above couplet reveals, is not the running away or escaping of the individual soul from the world, merging into the ineffable Absolute and cutting off all connections and relations from it and its creatures, but substituting the old self-centred and limited connections are relations with the boundless and spiritual love for all and working for all without any idea of return in coin or kind or sensual gratification or mental satsfaction. The Sadguru speaks of "One World" with the inner feeling of oneness, not in a dreamy or conventional manner, but in the true sense. He does not only claim to possess all, but also to be possessed by all, not only to contain all, but also to be contained by all. He is both the possessor and the possessed, the container and the contained. He sees himself

in all and all in himself. He shatters the ego and instructs us that we are all members, one of another. Unless we realise this basic truth, this immortal teaching given out by the practical and immortal teacher of mankind, *Jadadguru Saheb Kabīr*, and act upon it, we shall never have peace and goodwill on earth.

This perfection of individual and collective or social consciousness, this boundless love for all, manifested by the Immortal Teachers in the above couplet, provides the underlying principles and sprouting seeds of the present-day *Sarvodaya* and the Pañcasila-Uplift and Welfare of All,—(Five Fundamental Principles of Behaviour) Movements which are arresting the attention of all and gaining ground in the whole world. This high-minded and heart-felt realization of the whole world as his own family, copes with the content of Nīti śloka (Rule of conduct) given below :-

"*This one is mine and that one is of other*" is a conception of the low-minded, but to the high-minded, the whole world is his family.

This change of the egoistic or even of the nationalistic consciousness into the cosmic, universal or Divine consciousness can alone bring about real peace upon our earth. Even the conquests of other world, such as the Moon, the Mars, etc., by flying machines invented or to be invented by science, cannot reconcile the discords of modern life, nor restore peace upon our earth. Without the transmutation of his self-centred consciousness, or of even the national egoism, man will carry quarrels and wars to other worlds even and disturb the tranquillity of other planets and stars too. The inner heart-felt feeling of the world-family, and not merely its idea, nor vision, nor mental recognition, nor conventions, can change for better the condition of humanity, can establish goodwill upon earth and deliver the desired good. How forcefully does the Mother of Shri Aurobindo Āśhram, Pondichery, proclaim the following lines with the prophetic prediction :-

> "*Governments succeed governments, regimes follow regimes, centuries pass after centuries, but human misery remains lamentably the same. It will always be so, as long as man remains what he is, blind and ignorant, closed to all spiritual reality. A transformation, an illumination of the human consciousness alone can bring about a real amelioration in*

the conditon of humanity. Thus even from the standpoint of human life, it follows logically that the first duty of man is to seek and posses the Divine consciousness."

(Words of the Mother)

The peak of the divine or spiritual consciousness demonstrated by the *Sadguru* in his couplet given above, can never be understood by persons leading the life of senses and not even by the intellectuals having mental reasoning as their sole guide to lead to Truth. The summit of the spiritual realisation of the *Sadguru* will far less be appreciated by them. Even the religionist, who practise penances and do benevolent deeds for getting returns (sweet fruits) here or in heaven, shall not be obtain even a bit of this Divine Delight here on this earth. But those spiritual aspirants who have received even a flash of this Universal Consciousness, can easily understand it, fairly derive benefit and inspiration from it and fully appreciate the Immortal *Sadguru* and Jagadguru *Sāheb Kabīr.* Rightly, it has been observed by him :-

He who has been touched by such a peak of spiritual or Divine consciousness, can easily understand the other so affected. How can the low creatures wallowing in sensual pleasures and beastly enjoyments even recognize him?

"*A thing of experience can never be known by any stretch of imagination.*"

"*A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, Drink deep or touch not the perennial stream.*"[1]

No doubt Kabir tried his utmost for creating an atmosphere of communal harmony, universal brotherhood, equality and social justice.

2. Kabīr : The Ministerial of the Unknown

A true *Kabīrpanthi* and well known educationist of Mauritious Purushottam Das Sāheb writes :

Kabīr declares the mystery of his birth which applies on everybody "*I came from the unconditioned, I was bodiless. I took body and I came, in this body I am called Kabīr. No one could pierce the mystery of my Being*".

"The true seeker accepts, metaphysically at least, that in the essentials there is a fundamental unity in all exoteric *paths.* This sublime truth has been proclaimed by many sages in different ways

in different languages and in various geographical parts of our planet. However in the long and hoary history of all the living faiths of mankind one can hardly find a being comparable to Sat Kabīr, the medieval poet-saint of India, His uniqueness is unparalleled in the history of the human race. His appearance, life circumstances, teachings and disappaerance from the world are a riddle to every scholar to solve. His life is a couplet to sings for all seekers on their way to freedom. Sat Kabīr was *Sui generis*", causeless and original. Even the language, vocabulary, style and methods of the strange *Sat Kabīr*, supposed to be unlettered, are still the subject matter of countless doctral thesises throughout the World.

Sad Guru Kabīr was surely a ministerial of the unknown, the unknown which in the words of the Chinese Taoist sage, Lao-Tse "*he who knows does not speak, he who speaks does not know for indescriable is the way*". Sat Kabīr's abode is surely the unknown, in comprehensible to us, mortals of the relative world caught in the snares of mutiplicity. To talk about his spiritual intinerary by scrutinising his sayings would be like tracking the path left by a bird in its flight across the infinite sky. Sat Kabīr surely sported in the physical frame of five elements but his oenciousness was ever immersed in the uncounditioned. He spoke from the point of view of Absolute consciousness of what metaphysicians call "*the Noumenal experience*". In him we observe the *"Coincidentia Oppositorium"*. The dissolution of all conflicts, the confluence and repository of all divergences.

Without offending logic and common on sense he crusaded uncompromisingiy and fearlessly against divisiveness, bigotry, casteism, and all the evils, ad infinitum, of our frail human nature. He challenged the lion in its den for he voiced out his attacks in Banares where Hindū and Moslem orthodoxy was causing great havoc. It is a paradox of the religious hisotry of humanity that these two traditions perpetually at daggers drawn, united to attack the heretic Kabīr who was dangerously offending to them. However they who attack the body but can not touch the soul melted before the power of the Supreme. The daily life of Sat Kabir was a symphony of love a burning rhapsody of the divine and his examplar of carrying out his craft (weaver) up to his last days is a lesson of great humility to so many so called spiritual parastites that abound in our modern world.

Kabīr never prepared or composed any poems or homilies

nor was he interested in scholarship. He was intent to bring wandering soul(s) ashore and instead of the Sanskrit language, which is like the inaccessible water in a closed well, he vehicled his extempore *upadesas* in the common language, Hindī, that meanders freely across the country like river water. His allegories are, deceptively simple, taken from the happenings of the immediate environment of his times. His poems were consequently the product of an expanded consciousness, the inchanting songs of eternity where there is not the commerce of coming and going nor any spiritual bargain. Thus he become the mysterious chosen ministrel of god, to sing the songs of the unknown. His aphorisms or short didactic poems, living testmonies of truth as they are often called have exerted a profound influence on man's thought. In Sat Kabīr one does not see the poetry of a passing mood nor the style of his personal experience but one can find expressions of the totality of Being. The most fundamental being that of *Ānandam* or Bliss.

Without being heretical or marginal Sat Kabīr is acclaimed without diffculty by the great traditions of Christian gnosticism, that particular teachings of Jesus as revealed in the Gospel of St Thomas. Sufiism, Zen, Taoism, Sikhism, Vaiṣṇavism, *Advaita Vedānta* and all relgions experience of mankind see in him their own. It is not strange that the Jains find in him the marks of their true Jina. The Sufis declare Kabīr as a MUWAHID, one who professed the oneness of the Lord, Hindūs and Sikhs alike revere him as a Supreme *guru*, the Christian gnostics of modern times accept him on the same stand as Jesus. Even the literary world acknowlede him as the father of modern Hindī literature. Marvellous *Sat Kabīr* has never finished to astonish us.

If Sat Kabīr is assimilated with reverence to all esoteric traditions this is because he came from, lived, spoke and taught about the supreme, the most high where the snares of causation space and time are not. In his earthly existence he exhorted slumbering souls to wake up from the trappings of *Māyā* (illusion) and to take to the return journey, to the original one. In fact this has been the true message of every *avatār*, of every prophet, saint and sage of all times. Sat Kabīr in his unique ways divests the soul of all its artificial paraphernalia, strips it of all its false trappings and in the supreme "Elan' we call *bhakti*, lays the pristine soul at the altar of the eternal. His poetical songs of profound beauty are so bold that they have been imbibed by all the populace of

North India like children imbibe their mothers milk. The two names that are on the lips of the north Indians are, according to Grierson, either the *Dohā of Sat Kabīr* or the *caupāī* of Goswami.

The most difficult problem for students of Sat Kabīr is that he is not amenable within the confines of any definite school of philosophy. He is irreducibly unique in his type and though he has been incorporated in many philosophico-theological system yet he outsoars them all but at the same time includes them all. He spoke neither of Dualism nor of non-Dualism, nor of qualified monism. His only song was that of unaloyed love and permanent abidance in God-Head with which he had become one. To understand Sat Kabīr one has to become like Sat Kabīr himself, for in Porphyry's words. "*Like is known only by the like and the condition of all knowledge is that the subject should become like the object*". This is the famous Kit-Bhring relationship of classical Indian mysticism. It can be only said that the dominant impressions he leaves to us is that of his vivid, intimate consciousness of the Divine presence and his attitudes to devotion.

Sat Kabīr I believe was not called upon to build a utopia or construct a new heaven and a new earth in the rarefied atmosphere of abstract thought. He was mandated by the unconditioned to bring ashore all ripe souls, to make them cross the terrible ocean of *saṁsāra*. To be sure there were in that society of his times wicked men and wastrels as well as men of nobility and virtue. With sure strokes he painted both sets of men. He wanted to be satisfied that society is organised with an eye to maintain conditions in which it would be easy for man to lead a moral life and that men were not left in doubt as to their functions and place in society as well as their ultimate destiny. But his only direct concern was release from phenomenal existence and all his existence was geared towards teaching the way to it. In depicting life and manners, and in formulating rules of conduct for individual success and social harmony he reminded men constantly that selfless love is the great power which keeps ceaseless watch over individuals, the state and society in general and which confers on lieves lived in accordance with its principles, riches beyond measure, that is spiritual self realization. The substance of our existence is love. The ground of our belief in the supreme is also love. For the man who does not have love in his heart is surely like a cemetry ground, a corpse. Love is rooted in peace and justice. It deals equally with king,

common man and pauper and love reveals itself to those who first sacrifice their, head (*ego*) said Sat Kabīr. Only he who knows love and melts in it like the salt doll in the ocean reachest the true destination.

Sat Kabīr sang of so many topics, "*musaco contigens cuncta lepore*" i.e. touching all things with poetic grace. And it is the sheer originality and deceptive simplictiy of his utterances that baffles our mind. Many argue that the utterances of Sat Kabīr are a mosic of different types of doctrines from several schools of thought stewn together to form a philosophy of his own. This is not only baseless and fallacious but sheer intellectual myopia, a disease which so many of our contemporaries suffer a predicament of the so-called modern education. Sat Kabīr is interesting from a psychological point of view, he was a suitable exponent of the depest mystical truth and teachings and in some cases this is combined with great literary power and beauty. It is evident that Sat Kabīr was never inclined to write but it can be inferred that love forced him to do so for he himself said that love gave him wisdom and subtlety and he simply preached the path of love. Indeed the whole of his life was a symphony of feeling, a song of love and forms a curious reaction against the exaltation of reason and logic, of dry intellectualism so common in his days. Thus he ventured along the intricacies of Divine love where the ego is not, and for him the culminating mystical experince took the form of melody rhythm and harmony. He is the most musical of all mystics and while others talk about or feels he sees it and lives the experience of the divine constantly. Hence the description of the ecstatic state is pecularly beautiful, he thinks in images and symbol of in his utterances we find some of the most equisite passage in the whole literature of mysticism, vertiable songs of spiritual joy, burning rhapsodies of the soul dissolved in the supreme lover, god. The sweetness of this spiritual song says Sat Kabīr is beyond any sound that may be heard with bodily ears, even lovers can only catch snathches of it.

Sat Kabīr was a weaver by profession but a mystic and seer by nature. But never before this strange man's advent has spiritual love been more rapturously sung. Little wonder that his devotional love songs deep in emotion and rich in melody have haunted the memory of all his contemporaries and the generations of men get to come after him will not be left insensible. This is because Sat Kabīr's love poems are deeply mystical in thought and symbolic

in expression. It was from him to matter of belief but of passionate knowledge he was sure about the Divine as his own existence. One thing peculiarly daring and orginal is in his use of the mystical methods of crystallizing a great truth in an apprently trivial fact.

The utterances of Sat Kabīr, the ministrel of the unknown are a masterpiece of Hindī literature one of the highest and purest expressions of human thought. His hymns to the supreme, to his name and honour burn with spiritual flame and soars with noble desire and are among the greatest of Hindī mystical poems. The value of his works for outweighs the Hindī literature and is one of the selected number of great works which have entered into the very soul of a whole nation and which consequently can never die. These sayings are not fettered by caste prejudices or any kind of barrier. I suppose this is because he song as a liberated soul and thus the works is didactic and not controversial. The saying owe much of their popularity to their exquisite poetic form. Each sākhī is a rhythmic couplet containing a complete and strking idea expressed in a refined and intricate metre. No translation can convey an idea without losing some of its charming effect. The translator is involuntarily exposed to infamy. Some of the sayings are just untranslatable. Even the most honest translation does not go undimmed by either religious inclination, racial sympathy or other prepossessions at the subconscious level. I belive a good translation demand the keeping of a literary judgement and a historic sense. With Sat Kabīr this is not very easy. The bravity rendered necessary by the form gives an oracular effect to the utterances of the master of Benares. Many of the Sākhīs are moral epigrams in a most difficult metre with some wonderful condensation of ideas. This remind us of ancient greek gnomic poetry. The epigrammatic masterpieces have profound significance and cannot be said, heard or sang with indifference. They just give us a jolt or set us to think, not peripherally but to think about our own "*thinking*".

The poetical dialect of Sat Kabīr is as mysterious as the author. It allows every kind and amount of ellipses so that each composition becomes like a multifaceted diamond which can reflect the same light in as many possible ways as its number of faces. It can be said that these sayings of Sat Kabīr are short epigrammatic, elliptical hyperbolic, concentrating with a remarkable brevity the whole truth which he intends to convey, moulding it into a highly polished shaft that would infaillably pierce the mind and fix itself in the memory.

Many give to the poem of Sat Kabīr a mystical interpretation, as an allegory exhibiting the Lila or the Divine spirit within the embodied soul. Many of these poems show the ascent of the soul from the human level to the divine, from time to the timeless, (eternal) and from the phenomenal to the noumenal. The emotional symbolism liberated by the god-intoxicated Sat Kabīr as he walks along the aveneus of love and sport in the intense bliss, unknown to the mind caught in duality, is indeed very touching. In borrowing a term from the celebrated Florentine (Italian) poet, Dante, we can liken Sat Kabīr to "A scribe of eternal love." He is still loved by millions of world people.

His love poems are a delicate example of what is called "*erotic mysticism*" that is the love and attraction of the soul for god and of god for the soul, expressed in the terms of love between men and women. It is a type of expression characteristic of the mystic who finds no other terms known to man to express the sense of insatiable craving and desiere as well as the rapture of intimate communion felt by the mystic towards God. Thus in simple terms of erathly love Sat Kabīr expresses to us the passionate delight, and peace of the soul in attaining to union with her God in whose dwelling is perfect Bliss. In many of his lyrics of flaming passion Sat Kabīr expresses his love longing to his lord and he describes it in terms that remain unmatched till our days. How can the common mortals who have bargained their birthright for dross understand such intoxication. This is the divine madness "of which Plato speaks," *The inebriation of Reality" the ecstasy which makes the poet "**drunk with life**".*

To deal adequately with all the works of Sat Kabīr, the thought and teachings they contain, would necessitate many volumes, if not a whole library entirely devoted to that purpose. This is because the poetry of Sat Kabīr is the poetry of the resonance of the greatness of the soul. It is not a state of becomeing but a state of being. It is the lustrous and unique expression of Ātmasākṣatkāra (self-realisation). Thus it demands a study with great minutiae so that our mind may catch a glimpse of the non-dual state.

It would be pleasant to say more on Sat Kabīr because writing on him it never exhaustive. It is clear that in dealing with him we are dealing with one of the greatest mystic of the world. Compassionate, yet rashly bold, deeply spiritual, yet intensely human his poems have racked humanity. He inherited the true paradoxical

nature of the mystic to which is added a beauty and delicacy of thought and expression of his own. All his poems form but one note in the mighty chorus of witnesses whose testimony is impossible for any thoughtul persons to igonore. In him we find god's own plenty.

The various works of Sat Kabīr stand unchallenged as one of the finest gem of poetry in the literature of the world. We amply feel that humanity would render justice to Sat Kabīr is some day his aphorism and love poems are accredited as belonging to the literature of the world. Humanity knows so little of its truely greatman."[2]

3. Satguru Kabīr : Exponent of the "Great Synthesis"

Dr. Jagessur Das hailing from *Gyana* is founder and President of Kabīr Association of Canada. He is medical practioner in British Columbia and preacher of Kabīr philosophy. Dr. Das writes :

Man is an integrated being. Every living thing is an integrated being. Every organ of man and animals functions in an integrated way with every other organ of the body. Nature herself is an "integrated being", since all the force of nature, and its various interelationships, function in an integrated way, as shown by the science of ecology. In this essay, I shall deal with man, ideally as an integrated being in his relationship to God. The body, mind, emotions and intellect need to function harmoniously for a aperson to maintain proper health. If the body is functioning well, and the mind is not, then dysfunction will occur in the body producing disease. The opposite is also true. Any malfunction will be expressed in one of two ways, either physically in the body, producing some physical illness, or mentally, producing some from of mental illness. But when man functions as an integrated whole-where the body, mind, emotions and intellect are funtioning harmoniously, then that person is in good health.

What then occurs in a person's life to upset harmony? Undoubtedly, the probelm rests with ideas about religion, or culture; about caste or race; about politics and social status, etc., as much as it rests with improper lifestyles. People create these differences and, by them, segregate themselves, according to their particular beliefs. Religions have their doctrines and dogmas, rituals and beliefs, and in each one, these are different. So religion causes disharmony. Similarly, every category listed creates disharmony. People realize

that disharmony brings suffering of various kinds, and that it should be avoided. Yet, ingrained patterns of behavior and allegiance are diffficult to remove, and so people fall into their groove, and stay in them being segregated from others.

Satguru Kabīr was such an exalted saint that he taught that all people are the same, irrespective of colour, caste, religion or traditions. He said :

> ***tahiya ham tum ekai lohu, ekai pran byapai mohu;***
> ***ekai jani jana sansara, kown gyan te bhayo niyara***

Again he states :

> ***awal allah nur upaya, kudrat ke sab bande,***
> ***ek nur te sab jag upajaya, kaun bhale ke mande***

'We all have the same blood and the same life force manifest in us. We are all born of the same mother (*māyā*). By what wisdom have we become different ?

... The same Divine Light has produced all of us, who then is great and who is low ?'

Satguru Kabīr has seen equality among all humans. He said that at birth we are all the same, without any caste, religion, culture, etc. These are thrust upon us by others. We thus start life in infancy being integrated and close to the Divine Being, and later we deviate further and further from an integrated life to one that becomes disintegrated by the various "*schisms*". Some adults, fortunately, strive later in life to regain the original integration by following a proper spiritual path.

Satguru Kabīr is truly a *guru* or saint for all people and for all times. Vaudeville in her book: Kabīr, states :

"Kabīr is one of the best-known and most revered names in Indian tradition. From the Panjab to Bengal and from the Himalayan frontiers to South India, he has long been hailed by Hindūs and Muslims alike as a great mystic and bold religious reformer. His name has travelled far and wide in the Indian subcontinent and, thanks to the admiration of Mahātmā Gāndhī and Rabindranāth Tagore, he is not completely unknown even in the West today. In the literary field too, Kabīra ranks very high: he is often hailed as the 'father of Hindi literature' and even sometimes placed on a par with the greatest *Hindī* poet, Tulsīdāsa, the author of the *Hindī Rāmāyaṇa* '*the Bible of Northern India*'.

In Indian religious history, Kabīr is unique: to the Hindūs, he is a *Vaiṣṇava bhakta*, to the Muslims a *pīr*, to the Sikh a *bhagat*, to the sectarian *Kabīrpanthis* an *avatār* of the supreme Being; to modern patriots, Kabīr is the champion of Hindū-Muslim unity, to neo-vedāntins a promoteur of the Universal Religion or the Religion of Man, who steadfastly opposed the superstitious beliefs..." In modern, progressive circles today, Kabīr is held in high estem as a social reformer, a bold enemy of Brahmanical pride and caste distinctions, a revolutionary whose scathing attacks on caste prejudices, the principles of untouchability, and forms of social discrimination are for ever famous and comforting to the enlightened Indian mind, like a breeze of fresh air. Kabīr appears to modern India to be the true symbol of nonconformity, of all that is free, noble, and challenging in the Indian tradition. Some contemporary Indian writers do not hestiate to compare him to the Buddha for the fearlessness of his character, the loftiness of his view, and his extraordinary hold on the common masses of India."

Satguru Kabīr was very clear sighted and he knew God initmately. He could thud debate with anyone without losing the debate. In "*Kabīr. The Great Mystic*," Isaac Ezekiel states:

"Within the range of reason, Kabīr is a most uncompromising rationalist." He is quite at home with the Vedāntic philosophy, with Brāhmaṇa and *Māyā*. He says :

anant nam hai brahm ke, tako war na par।
man mane so lijiye, kahai Kabir bichar॥

He talks of the "Brahm Agni" to be ignited in meditation. In the Vedānta system the *Ātam* and *Brahma* are not separate. Kabīr Sāheb has shown this in many ways :

lālī mere lāl kī jit dehkhun tit lal,।
lālī dekhan mai gai, mai bhi ho gai lal॥

Also :

tu tu karta tu bhaya, mujme rahi na hu;
bari pheri bali gai, jit dekhu tit tu"

These two *sākhis* show that Kabīr Sāheb realized his union with Brāhmaṇ. He also taught that Māyā is the cause of our bondage, so he sang :

man bairagi maya tyagi, shabd me surat lagai|

He also spoke of the *Sāṅkhya* system with the twenty-five categories of *prakṛti*. He thus says :

jiwan panch pachiso lage, kam krodh maha mad page|

These are the twenty five *tanmātrās* of which the whole universe is formed, from the gross matter to the *ātmā* itself. He talk of the three *guṇas* that are in us along with the twenty five other categories. In the Gyāna Gudaḍī he says :

panch tattwa ki gudadi bini, tin guṇan se ṭhadhī kinhi;
tāme jīva brahmn our māyā, samarath aiśa khel banaya

According to the *yoga* system of Patañjali, there are the right and left channels, and suṣumnā. Kabīr Sāheb had said :

iṅgalā piṅgalā ke ghar jaī, sukhman nari rahai thaharai

He also says :

yogi ap ap me bhujhe

Satguru Kabīr lived *as a Karm Yogi*, as he was a humble weaver and relied on his own earnings for his livelihood. He worked without attachment, and freely gave to those who were in need.

In *Bhakti Yoga* he was one of the greatest of bhaktas. In the *Bhaktmāl* of Nābh Dās is stated :

bhakti Dravid upaji laye Rāmānand,
pargaṭa kiye Kabir ne tīn lok nau khand

Kabīr Sāheb had a deep love for God and he approached God as a lover would approach her beloved. He taught that *bhakti* must be so strong that:

Khand brahmand sukha pare, bhaktī bīj na jai

He as quite at home practicing *Rāja Yoga*, for he was able to subdue all this desires and senses and center them into the atma. He thus states:

Man ko mari gagan charhi jai, manasarover paith nahai

and:

Surati nagar me kar sail, ja me atam ko mail

Along this line, he taught *Sahaja Yoga* for obtaining *Sahaja*

Yoga Sahaja Samādhi. He did no believe in the rigorous disciplines of the traditional *yoga* method, but believed that if one is pure in heart and practices devotion and *sumiran* along with meditation, then he will realize God.

Kabīr Saheb also laid great stress on gyan, or knowledge, of the ātmā and paramātmā.

He taught:

Sab ghat meri saiya, sūnī sej na koi;
balihari ghat tasu ki ja ghat pargat hoi

He also stated:

gyān gaṅgā nahale pyare mana

Satguru Kabīr was one of the greatest exponent of Nirguṇ Bhakti and he showed this in what is called the Nirguṇ poetry.

He was also :***dou dinan ka pir, and hindu ka guru mussalman ki pir.***

Satguru Kabīr must be known for his "great synthesis" of all religions and philosophies into a synthetic whole, which needs expression through an "*integrated whole person*". Only such a person will be fit to realize God and become enlightened."[3]

4. The relevance of Satguru Kabīr to our Modern Times

Sookreet Das Rohee, a *Kabīrpanthi* scholar of Mauritius writes :

According to the Gregorian Calendar, we are in the last decade that shall lead us to the momentous date of the year 2000. There is hardly any citizen today who has not pondered (is not sensitive) to the approach of the third millennium. This age which is fast approaching its end has witnessed tremendous events that have drastically changed the lives of man. It has been an age of unparalelled achievements, not only in science and technology, but uprecedented success have also been achieved in fine arts, education and in the political field. The wide gap of space, time and distance have disappeared.

The traditional epoch is breaking up fast and the history of humanity seems to have undergone a kind of linear acceleration. It is interesting to note that the last centuries of the millennium have given birth to geniuses like Einstein, Gandhi, Luther King and others. However, this age has paradoxically also produced an

unsurmountable wave of irrationalism and inevitably has witnessed the traumatic two world wars and the threatening reigns of dictators. Man has made a long stride from the caveman, journeying through an age of science and technology, reaching an age of nuclear research and computer. But it is also an uncertain episode of humanity overlapped by the space age with the flux of events gathering momentum.

Yet, even the best minds cannot predict what is to come next. Though these dramatic changres have stimulated our thinking and action profoundly, our human outlook has a hardly changed. Kingley Dunham's timely question "*can our species survive the next hundred years ?*" comes to our mind. For, a disturbed and destructive atom along with an erratic computer under political adventure may explode the whole world to its obsolete wretchedness within the split of a second. A chaos unthought the undreamt of by humanity may follow, annihilating all life species in the universe.

Nevertheless, there is a silver linging to this cloud, for humankind has, throughout history, always been able to solve problems. Since the dawn of civilization and history, no ocean has been too wide, no mountain too high, no horizon beyond one's reach. However, what one should be concerned with is not the mere arithmetic of years, nor the inexorable chronology of events, but rather with the state of becoming of the phenomenal specy called man. He has to resolve the problems of his own existence as he is persistently confronted with a profound sense of anxiety, fear, hunger, starvation, diseases, war and sudden death. Such a state of affaris, definitely gives rise to a marked sense of spiritual insecurity, lack of respect and a total absence of love and healthy relationships, turning life meaningless and purposeless.

The geometric progression achieved in economic and material comfort is in direct constrast to a sharp decline in inner peace, comfort and well-being. Mankind is suffering from a kind of loneliness, a void unknown to our ancestors in the caves. The paradox is further stressed when we sense a spiritual isolation, with people suffering a tragic and unprecedented solitude in the very midst of pomp, luxury, human din and bustle and laughter.

A deep observation would reveal that all attempts to drive away these problems have lamentably these probelms have lamentably failed. The formulae of all organized religion have turned out to be a pipe-dream due to their spiritual bankruptcy. Almost

all religions have failed to hit the right target and are themselves falling victims to rationalistic scrutiny, irreligious cultural proselytization and are doomed to face a slow death. Fanaticism, excessive indoctrination, dogmaticsm, fundamentalism and selfish aims have chained religion and deprived it of its true purpose. It has been reduced to a mere tool of power-acquisition, fame-fishing, status consolidation and the fulfilment of innumerable selfish motives. With the passage of time, religion appears to be crippled by the exceses of proselytization, casteism, religious ostracism and a cultural and religious facism. It has been dragged a long way far from its lofty ideals and aims.

On the other hand, communism which had promised paradise through a classless society has equally failed in raising the level of life of mankind. The recent survival from this, has no doubt, left serious scars ad countries under such regime are fast decaying. Similarly, science and technology, which had banished religion and spirituality from the heart of man, have brought considerable material comfort and happiness, but have also given rise to serious doubts and scepticism as regards to the future of man. The destructive tendencies of science with apocalypit proportions have brought more miseries and unrest in today's world. Man stands at a critical juncture. Humanity at the brink of a new milleninum, suddenly seems to be caught in a maze. Confusion is the order of the day.

Everyone seems to be all of a sudden concerned of man's future. While organised religions speak of some catachylsmic end of the planet, socialist and thinkers talk of a new era of spirituality. They are of view that the third millennium will be spiritual. No doubt, this assertion brings out a fundamental question. The world would turn to spritiuality by what system? What formulae? What "*ism*"? What will be its modus operandi? Or amongst other considerations and confusions which oppress and suffocate humanity, will it just be another empty slogan ?

All the above-raised queries, questions and apprehensions will find their solutions in the teachings of a man of this millennium, who through his out-of ordinary spiritual genius has communicated the divine message of the Supreme Being in the simple and universal language of love. The great soul is none other than Satguru Kabīr Saheb, the relgious and devotee poet of the famous Medieval age, also known as the "*Golden Age*". He deeply probed in the mysterious and mystical questions of life, such as the meaning of life and

man, the nature of the world, the destination of man, the nature of the Supreme Being and above all the liberation from the shackle of birth and death, suffering pain, and struggle. These topics of spiritual and philosophical depths, have been overtly treated by Kabīr Saheb. He has exposed the simple and easy path of love of the Divine. Force (*Bhakti*), which is deeply embedded in the depth of our being, as a state of equipoise, calmness, serenity and an ineffable peace within oneself.

Blended with logic, his teachings offer apt solutions to the riddle of our complex civilizations. Though basically his teachings stem out of deep-rooted Indian philosophical experience, yet they reflect much of universality and catholicity. The path shown in far from being categorically Eastern or Western. Rather, it belongs to the whole human race. In fact it is the very core and basis of all true reglions. Hence, the teachings of Kabīr Saheb is not the exclusive property of Hindūism, nor the mere monopoly of his followers. The teachings find their echo more or less deeply buried in all religions. In short, as the laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore puts it, "*it is the religion of man*". That is why the path enuciated by Satguru Kabīr has its roots in India, yet is assunmes universal dimensions and is capable of being a guide-line to all seekers of truth.

Kabīr Saheb's teachings deal with the fundamental questions of the true identity of life—who are you ? Where have you come from ? Where would you go affer death ? What is the purpose of life ? How can one free himself from the repeated cycle of birth and death, constant suffering pain and the incessant struggle for survival? Satguru Kabīr presents a simple path wich appeals to one and all, irrespective of caste, creed or intellectual status. It is the simple and easy path of love and devotion to the Supreme Being, whom he considers to be the very cause of all existence, the essence of all life, the Be—all and the End—all of the whole universe. He says.

> "***He who is imperceptible/Yet who can be perceived,***
> ***The Truth that is manifest/Yet hidden***
> ***The secret that is hidden/Yet manifest***
> ***One with the ineffable state.***"

He considers the Supreme Being to be the Divine Spirit, the Absolute Truth. Hence, the realization of this Highest Truth should

be the prime concenrs of man's life. This Divine Force behind all existence is immutable, perfect and permanent. He is alluded to being the Limitless One, but often called by several names, such as God Ram, Hari or Allah. However, he is not to be known or comprehended by mere descriptions, intuition or introspection. Rather, he is to be known by the experience, perception and the realization of the Soul (Ātman) on a high level of consciousness. This, in turn, is effected when one senses the Absolute Truth (Satnāma). A true seeker, through the guidance of a spiritual master (*Guru*), no doubt, realizes and attains the Eternal Truth (Satpuruṣ) who has neither a past nor a future, but always as eternal present—hence One who is beyond the limits of time and space. It should be noted that the nature of the Absolute Truth is to be realized, experienced and known practically. It is not a matter of mere intellectual pursuit, discussion, debate and learning.

Kabīr Saheb says thus,

> "***Having realised the Lord within, my thoughts rest only in Him. Now, wherever I cast my thoughts or eyes, I see none else but Him... Since I have realised this Truth, I sense the presence of the Lord everywhere.***"

The next important truth taught by Kabīr Saheb is the Soul (Ātman). According to him the soul has the same characteristics of the Supreme Soul; being unborn, eternal, ever blissful. It is the true and original state of all beings. Yet it is beyond all forms and gender. Being the very essence of all existence, it resides in the heart of all and is free from sins, death, hunger and thirst. It is through it that the whole body activates. It is the one that exists with its own luminous nature in the intellect. The soul is also the witness of all external changes as a result of cause and effect. Hence it is to be realised within one's own inner self. Kabīr says of it : "*It is a particle of God; Like the inedlible marks of ink on paper, It cannot be erased.*"

The third truth raised by Kabīr Saheb is "*Māyā*", which is generally accepted as the mysterious power, the force and cosmic illusion which creates, sustains and destroys the universe in successive cycles. Just as the Supreme Being, it is accepted as being without a beginning, but unlike the Supreme Self which has also no end, Māyā has an end. Kabīr Saheb says thus.

"The gross phenomenal world was hidden before creation.

Hence the gross physical body did not exist then. The individual soul was, then free from grief, but Māyā did exist because it is without a beginning."

Māyā is also considered to be a negative force, for the entire mundane existence is misled by her. She is called "*Prakṛti*", nature in state of equipoise (constituting the three elements, *Satoguṇa*, *Rajoguṇa* and *Tamoguṇa*). Māyā being the generating force behind *prakṛti* is responsible in bringing multiple changes and mutations in nature. Another aspect of Māyā is associated with "*Nescience*" (*Avidyā*), which happens when *satoguna* gets subordinate to the other *guṇas*. Hence Māyā is the force behind material creation and the "*Jīva*" (Individual Soul) due to its past subsequent "*Karmas*", keeps on coming in the sway of "*Māyā*" and rotates the repeated cycle of birth and death. By the grace of a true spiritual master (*Guru*) one comes to free himself from the grip of Māyā and attain liberation (Mokṣha).

The question of liberation inevitably brings the question of bondage which is due to the soul being bound by innumerable Knots of past *karma*, in turn, due to insatiated desires generated by senses. Inspite of its being of the nature of Supreme Bliss, the individual soul, out of ignorance, sinks in unfathomable misery."[4]

5. The Great Master

In his paper on Kabir, K.L. Chanchreek and Bhagwan Das Kabirpanthi, a scholarly saint from India wrote at the time of International Conference held in Mauritius :

"A Perfect Master such as Sadguru Kabīr is one who had reached the highest spiritual region and is in intimate tune with the Lord. He is a master of the spiritual path and guides his disciples (panthī) all the way through the journey. His wordly social status has no significane. He may live in a palace or a thatched hut; he may make his journeys on foot. A weaver but known as philosopher, Sadguru and respected world over, he revealed the true love to God and humanity.

The only test is that a Perfect Master initiates his disciples in the word. He reveals to him the Word, with the Power and light of which the disciple travels along the journey. By a steady process, a Perfect Master reveals to his disciples all the spiritual secrets, unravels all the spiritual Truth, grants all the spiritual understanding and Wisdom.

A Perfect Master places, at the time of initiation, his astral form within the disciple, and in this form guides and protects the disciple in this World and all through the journey. By the power of the Word he cleaness his disciple of all sins and makes his soul fit to see the Lord.

He fress his disciple from all passions, breaks all wordly attachments, develops in him ever increasing devotion, disent angles him from the wheel of transmigration, and makes him his own equal. No one can recognise a Perfect Master except by his grace. Complete faith in the Master and surrender to him is the first condition.

A Master like Sadguru Kabīr unlocks the Word. The Word is the supreme creative power of the Lord, the Lord in dynamic form. The Word sustains the universe and every living creature. It detroys all passions and wordly attachments. It is the only power that can do so.

A Perfect Master makes every disciple his spiritual equal. In short, he makes his disciple one with the Lord. Reaching the feet of a Perfect Master is a very, very rare gift of the Lord. Sadguru Kabīr has written over and over again that a disciple must completely Surrender himself to his Master. He must look upon his own body, mind, wealth and position as gifts from the Master which he may use but to which he must not be attached. He must worship the Giver and not the gifts. Normally, the world worships the gifts, not the Giver. We spend our time and energy ingeting wealth, positon and honour, and we worship that on which we spend our time and energy. Our mind is attached to them. We worship everything arround us, our profession, learning, trade business, friends, realtives, community and nation. All this worship of things created must end says Saheb Kabīr.

Devotion to the Word brings about real detachment. Detachment from the world must be of the mind. Mere physical detachment is worse than useless. If we leave our family and go into the wilderness but continue to think even more intensely of our family of what use is that detachment? If we lead a 'celibate life, but are attached to women in our heart of hearts of what value is that celibacy?

If we abandon wealth and honour, but constantly recall our days of wealth and honour of what worth is that renunciation?

This is exactly what happens to those who outwordly and

forcibly 'abandon' this attachments, without prior attachment to something for more attractive the Word.

Real renunciation comes only when the mind gets attached to the sweetness of the Word. Then the mind is naturaly detached from the world. Complete Surrender to the will of the Master is the first test of real discipleship. One who does not so surrender himself is not a disciple but a rebel, not a soldier but a mutineer. This was taught by Sadguru Kabīr Saheb."[5]

6. Satyanāma Satguru Kabīr

Three Sisters Sadhvi Brajeshwaree, Sarveshwaree and Parameshwaree devoted their lives to the pantha, renunciating the world. They belonged to Kabir temple, Vacoas, Mauritius. They expressed their views jointly :

"India is a land of saints and sages. Saints are like mirror upon whom God reflects. It is really difficult to find a place in India where saints have never walked. It is because of being a holy place that even God tries to find an opportunity of styaing there. Out of the long galaxy of saints, let us pick up Satguru Kabīr, the well-known among the *Nirguṇa* order of saints.

Little is known about his early life. Satgur Kabīr appeared in 1398 and disappered in 1518 A.D. Kabīr Sāheb was first found in a baby form afloat on lotus petals in the Lahar Tala in Kāshī. Nirū (a weaver) and his wife Nīmā took the child to their place. Garibadās Ji described his appearance as follows :-

> ***Gagan mandal se outre Satguru purush Kabir;***
> ***Jalaj mahi pargat kiye, Sab piran ke peer***

Purush Kabir, the true spiritual guide and teacher, the saint of all saints, descended from the heavenly plane and made his appearance on the lotus.

Saheb Kabīr, was illumined by Swāmī Rāmānand Mahārāja. He was above all religions and sects. His teachings were on worldy and other wordly affairs. He was accepted as Satguru (True Spiritual Teacher) by both the Hindūs and the Muslims. He was the messenger of Peace and Unity.

The time when he appeared, India was in great disorder. The Muslims and the Hindūs were quarelling because of religion and sects. The teachings of the scriptures were misunderstood and people who were trying to see God were seeking of Him in all kinds

of erroneous practices. They did not know that the True knowledge and the Real Happiness (etc.) were within their heart. So Satguru Kabīr rightly and forcibly unjoined upon them :

Sab ghat mera Saheba sooni sej na koy
Balihari va dass ki ja ghat pargat hoy|

God dwells in all, and no one lives without Him. The one in whose heart, the Lord comes to light, is blessed.

In order to make them understand more clearly, Satguru as the true Representative of God openly declared to them in this way :-

Pani bich mean piyasi mohin sun sun away hansi
Ghar mein bastu mara nahin away ban ban phirat udasi
Atam jnana bina nar bhatke kya Mathura kya kashi

On hearing that the fish (*ātmā*) in the water (body) is thirsty, I laugh. You do not neither know nor see the Real (*Ātmā*) in your body and you go on roaming from the place to another; to Mathura or to Kashi in vain.

It is just like a ball of sugar, when put in a glass of water is dissolved into the water and lost. Similarly the "Jīva" in trying to measure, God loses his individual egoism and becomes one with Him (God).

Too much enjoyment and pleasure degrades a man and makes him suffer much at last. Hence Satguru Kabīr sympathetically declared:-

Chalti chakki dehk kar diya kabīra roy
Do patan ke beech me sabit raha ne koya

On seeing the grinding of the mill which crushes all that comes between the upper and the lower stones (which means between day and night), Satguru Kabīr has shed tears. But he alone who clings to the axle (Satya Saheb or God) around which the (world) goes around is free. But he who has gone away from the axle (God), has not their bones crushed to pieces.

God (the spiritual truth) is beyond the scope of reading and writing. It is through direct perception that He can be acquired. The marriage processionists (Indriyan or senses) are left beyond when the groom (*Parmātmā*) and the bride are wedded (joined).

Padh Padh pothi Jag muan Pandit Bhaya na koi
Dhai aksher prem ke padhe so Pandit hoi.

Satguru Kabīr said that all his time had been spent in reading and writing, but no one could become a real Pandit (a very wise man). But he who has learnt the word consisting of 2½ syllables that is Prem (True Love) is turned into a Paṇḍit.

Because Satguru Kabīr Saheb gave the world the message of Universal brotherhood he was called Satguru (True Spiritual Guide). He was an incarnation of God Himself. His real greatness has come to light after his disapperance."[6]

7. Sant Kabīr, the Poet, the Philosopher and the Holyman

A *Kabīrpanthi* and educationist, Mrs. Nirmala Radhaya of Mauritius writes :

"Most people know that Sant Kabīr is a poet-philosopher. Any reference to Sant Kabīr or Kabīr Sāheb immediately brings to our mind Kabīr Sāheb's poetic compositions, whether they be in the form of "*Kabīr bhajans*" that is the poet's devotional songs of the "*Kabīr vāṇī*" namely his sayings.

I myself first came to know about Sant Kabīr from his popular song: "*Ghooṅghat ke pat khol re, tohe piya milenge.*" It was interpreted by the famous Indian lady vocalist: "*Juthika Roy*". I was told that song was a *Kabīr bhajan.* It made a strong impression on me.

I was still a child then. I learnt it at once and made it a point of personal pride to sing it at cultural functions after taking care to mention that it was written by the famous Indian Poet Kabir Sāheb. Oddly enough, at that time, I had absolutely no notion of the deep poetic sense inherent in the song! What must have appealed to my childish mind must have been its lovely melody and the singer's masterly style in its rendering.

It was years later, when I learnt Hindī and studied the works of Sant Kabīr that the full meaning of these words became clear to me. I was simply fascinated by Sant Kabīr's poetic brilliance. The immense beauty of the imagery in that poem and the vividness with which it is evoked the Artist in Kabīr. His pen has the acute sharpeness of the sculptor's chisel and the rich expressiveness of the painter's brush together.

All the other poems of Sant Kabīr reveal similar qualities of poet excellence and artistic ability. These are further heightened by the extreme delicacy and grace of the lyrical form which he employs to express himself. Music simply flows from all the works

of Sant Kabīr. It is for this reason that his works have attained an important place in the realm of light Classical Indian Music. His songs fit the moods and rythms of all the infinite variety of Indian Rāgas and Talās.

At this juncture, however, it is important to note that mere lyrical beauty was not the ultimate goals of Sant Kabīr's poetry. Sant Kabīr was not for the expression of sensuous pleasure through poetry, nor was he just an apostle of "*Beauty, or Beauty's sake*".

Sant Kabīr was essentially a philosopher. He was basically interested in discovering the true meaning and purpose of human life and he sought to explain the real role of the human being in society. Poetry served as a medium for him to conduct this enquiry. With the intent to the scientist he set out to answer a number of important questions after making a comprehensive survey of the social life around him. His poems are records of his close observations on various aspects of human behaviour. They contain a very deep analysis of the nature and significance of the various customs, traditions and instituions which shape all aspects of man's life. Finally he makes his own conclusion about the essence of human existence.

Full knowledge of God dawned upon him when he was pondering bow man was to detach himself form worldy goals and looking for something more substantial and lasting in life.

The religion of Sant Kabīr is different from the established forms of religions which were widespread in India in this time. He belives in God, but his God is nei'her material nor immaterial; He is neither personal nor impersonal; He is not an idol and not a human being, but He is Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient:

"*My God',* says Sant Kabīr, "*is without any form. He does not appear in the world of forms...*" He is not to be found in Temple or in Mosque, nor in Kaaba, Kashi or Kailas, God is within us and around us. If only we would life the veil of ignorance off our eyes and wake from our slumber we would see him.

Sant Kabīr prescribed the path which men should follow to reach God. It consists of unconventional principles:

"***It is not the austerities that mortify the flesh which are pleasing to the Lord...***

The man who is kind and who practices righteousness
Who remains passive amidst affaris to the world,

Who considers all creatures on earth as his own self,
He attains the Immortal Being,
The true God is ever within him."

Sant Kabīr seriously reflects and meditates on the manner in which all human beings are preoccupied with the achievement of worldy goals: youth, beauty, health, wealth, scholarliness, mental and spiritual achievement, power, glory, name and fame-All these are forms of Māyā or illusion. He warns them against becoming slaves of Māyā: "Listen to me O Brethren, Beware of Māyā and her illusion." bacause Māyā nurtures all vices desire, envy, greed, jealousy etc. These are dangerous and destructive for the individual and for the entire society as well. They reduce human beings to the lowest levels of bestiality:

"*When Māyā has taken hold of the mind there remains no difference between them. It is owing to such blind union that the three world are plunged into delusion!*"

Accordingly Sant Kabīr advises human beings to stay detached. He uses symbolic and metaphorical presentation to demonstrate how pointless it was for them to hanker after the mutifaceted maltifestations of Māyā for at their death they would have to leave all behind and go away all alone.

During this process of investigation Sant Kabīr exposes the true nature of the human being with a sharpness and realism which is rare to encounter among poets. He reveals the truth with such stark nakedness that it shocks and torments by its effect. In this respect many critics have accused him of being a cynic, a nihilist and a pessimist, but that criticism was unjust. Those who have launched it must have missed to understand the exact meaning which underlies his philosophy.

The fact is that Sant Kabīr is a mystic philosopher and poet. As a poet, he can be equalled to the greatest poets of the world especially we are to consider the splendid artistry and poetic brilliance with which he has exposed the crudest truths and most sordid aspects of life's realities. There is great subteness and refinement in the way in which Sant Kabīr symbolically expounds his philosophy. His style is comparable to the most sublime forms of the ballet in Western Classical Dancing or to those of Classical Indian Dancing.

Sant Kabīr's ultimate goal in life was basically spiritual. He was in search of eternal truth. Through his meditations he succeeded

to transcend the realms of both potery and philosophy for he attained self realisation and had the revelation of the Absolute Truth which he was searching for. Sant Kabīr became a Saint and ultimately the philosophy of Sant Kabīr become religion for him.

From the beginning, Sant Kabīr believed in the existence of a superior and eternal being beyond the manifestations of worldly phenomena around us, but he had not had any communion with him."[7]

8. The Nama Jap Yoga of Sat Kabir

Mahārāja Śri Swāmi Bhagwandas Saheb (1929-1983) was the Acharya of the Sir Kabīr Mandir Vacoas Mauritius. The following article which he first wrote in Hindī was published in the Satya-Sandeśa-in 1973. An English translation with some slight modifications is here offered to the readers. Explaining nama japa the writes:

"The world is intent towards happiness. Even a casual look around shows to us that, consciously or unconsciously, the actions of all manifested beings have as basis the seeking of the happiness. Yet proper analysis reveals that instead of happiness the whole manifested world is sunk in misery and dire sufferings. This stark truth which centuries ago caused the great Gautama Buddha to declare vehemently that "*Sarvaṁ Dukhaṁ*", every where there is suffering, has lost nothing of its significance in our so called modern world. In fact it has gathered momentum and all are unanimous, world-wide, to say that humanity is inexorably experiencing unprecedented suffering. In fact the very existence of the human specy seems to be at stake. Suffering seems to know no frontiers and it is causing havac everywhere. Six centuries ago the great master of Banaras, Satpuruṣa Kabīr declared:

> "***To all those who have taken the body (manifested beings) I have seen but misery not a tinge of happiness***" **tinge.**

Austerities cannot be practiced only you can take to Nama Japa.

To the rational mind and logically enough the above statements beg for certain fundemntal and legitimate questions about the nature of Nāma-Japa-Yoga is the continuous repetition or remembrane of the lord's Name. The repetition of the lord's Name which is know

as "*Sumiran Marg*" is acknowledged being one of the simplest and easiest method of self-realisation says Kabīr:

> **"*Easy in the path of remembrance* (of the Lords Name) as taught by the Satguru**
>
> ***Who remembers the Lord with each breath is sure to realise Him one day.*"**

It is important to understand the matter clearly. At a glance we find that there are countless names given to the lord. And different *gurus* give different Nāma-dīkṣa (name-Initiation) to their *celā* i.e. disciples. However among all these names the *Rāma-Nāma* has the greatest Supremacy. According to the *Padma Purāṇa*:

> "***Ramante Yogine Jasmine nityānand cidātmanīe. Iti Rāma padanasau parabrahmabidhīyte***"

That is, that Rāma-Nāma on which all yogis are meditating upon, on this very Nāma, with love and devotion must one do Japa.

There is indeed a vast literature on the greatness of the Name of the Lord in all the esoteric traditions of mankind. A great number of self-realized souls have expounded the greatness of the Name of the Lord, among others, Kabīr Sāheb, Guru Nānak Dev, Tukārām, Nām deva, Goṣwamī Tulsidās, Ṃaulana Rumi, Mansur-al-Hallaj, St John., St Therese of Avila etc...However it is extremely difficult to talk about or describe the name of the lord. The Guru Grantha Sāheb, cannonical scripture of the Sikhs, explains that:

> "***without eyes is Nāma seen and without ears it is heard***"

And Sat Kabīr who is among the most famous exponent of Nāma say:

> "***of Shabā (name) doth everyone talk but that sabda is transcedent. The tongue cannot utter it, only the soul can behold it***".

There is no paradox in the above statement. It is clear that God and God's name are one but the mind caught in duality cannot understand it. The saying of Śrī Kabīr here indicates that in the soul there is no duality, no subject—object differentiation, but only

transcendental unity or oneness. So the poverty of human language, which stems for the premises of duality, is helpless to bring the Nāma of the lord to any description within categories or attributes. Nāma is apprehended from a true master through initiation. This brings us to an important pillar of the Nāma Japa Yoga called the *Guru*. The *Guru* is the one who shows the path from darkness to light. He is the physician of the soul who cures it once for all of the reccuring ailments of birth and death. In our modern times there seems to be a confusion about gurudom. It seems that in an our age, where spiritual succour is in short supply, alegion of so called god men has mushroomed to attend to that want. The affluent society in particular has proved to be a lucarative hunting ground for them. Personality cults and spiritual empires alike have flourished into empires that in monetary terms are equal to the giants of commerce and industries. And which in terms of influence extend their reach to everypart of the globe. One is offering you the eternal orgasm, the other pretends to touch away you blues, still others way sell a mantra to you or squarely relieve you of your wallet. All these tricks according to them is the short cut to Nirvāṇa. It is needless to say that these charlatans who pose as *guru* are a serious disgrace to mankind and instead of liberating the stultified mind brings it to further miseries. All true masters have warned us about these pitfalls. Sat Puruṣa Kabīr has a remarkable saying about this sad situation:

> "***He whose guru is blind (of knowledge) what can the poor disciple do.***
> ***The blind leading the blind both fall in the well (of ignorance)***".

From a practical point of view there are three types of gurus. First there is the Paṇdit (priest) *guru* who has had a formal religious training and is authorized as such to give initiation in a sacremental way. Secondly we have the Yogi guru who is himself a sincere aspirant and is practising assiduously and sincerely. He may give initiation to others and both *guru* and disciple practice ardently. Thirdly there is the *Sat Guru*, who is in steady abidance of the unconditioned (soul). He dwells in the transcendent sphere of spiritual conciousness, his physical body and senses being no impediment

to the realisation of his true inner self. To him the illusion of the physical world is no longer veil to hide the substratum of all phenomena. The mind, the arch-juggler, is to longer veil to hide the substratum of all phenomena. The mind, the arch-juggler, is to him a docile and faithful servant. The initiation from such a *guru* is final, irreversible. He brings the wandering soul(s) to their true abode. Such a *guru* is indeed very rare as the economy of nature do not produce them in batches like university graduates. It is indeed a great fortune to come across such a high soul. The scriptures point out that it only after meritorious acts done in past births that one comes across such a liberated soul who delivers one from the trammels and fetters of the cycle of birth and death. Examples of those who came across such *gurus* in their earthly existence are Dhanī Dharmadās Sāheb who had as *guru* Sat Kabīr, Baba Mardāna and *guru* Nanak Dev, Mirā Bāī and guru Ravidās. It is good to note that only a SATGURU, one who transcends time, space and causation can liberate others. All else is only trial and error or mere approximations.

In *Nāma-Japa Yoga* we thus see a kind of tripolar basis, the Name of the lord, the *satguru* and the initiation process. This tripolar basis is the form and substance of all spiritual traditions. It is the esoteric basis on which all exoteric structures rest. Without it no spirituality exist. This aspect of spirituality was known to the Ancient Greeks who were the precussors of modern European civilizations. In their writings the Greek mystics mention this "śabad", socrates for examples says that within himself he heard an inner sound which transported him to realms transcendent and Divine. Pythagoras, the celebrated Greek Mathematician, also makes a mention of it when he talk of "*the music of the spheres*", it is surely a reference to this transcendental śabad. But unfortunately with the passage of time and due to the law of entrophy (disorderliness), to which all organized religious are inexorably subjected to in their exoteric forms, all these deep truths have been inxorably subjected to in their inexorably subjected to in their exoteric forms, all these deep truths have been anathemized, grossly imsunderstood or simply set aside by over-rationalistic mind.

Now what is meant by Japa. Etymologically in Sanskrit language the world Japa has two letter "*Ja and Pa*" and its meaning

is clearly brought out in the Agni Puraṇa:

> "***Jakaro Janma viched paap nashkam***
> ***Tasma Jap iti prokto janmapaap nashakan***".

That is with the letter "*JA*" all bondages of past births are burnt and any future birth as prevented And with the letter "*PA*" all sins are atoned.

With this at heart one must understand the suffering involved in the cycle of birth and death, submit to the *sat-guru*, obtain Nāma-dikhs (initiation) from him and with every breath pratice Nāma-Japa-Yoga.

There are three types of *Japam* (a) *Vācik* (vocal) (b) Mānasic (mental) (c) Upansu (lip Jap). During *Japam* when the sound emitted is audible then it is vocal *Japam*. But when only the lips are moved and no sound is heard it is know as Upāmsu Japam. Silent repetition of the name at heart, constantly like an unbroken flow of oil, is known as *mānsic Japam*. Now a question arises. Which of these three types of *Japam* is the best. A Hindū metaphysical treatise called the "Rāmāyaṇa Sivavākyam" gives the answer.

> "***Antar Japanti Naam Jivit Mukti bhavanti***"

That is by doing *Japam* in the cave of the heart one becomes liberated while still alive. *Sat Purusa* Kabīr Sāheb resumes this in a very suggestive way and draws our attention very interesting state of being.

> ***Jibh honth hile nahin vastu rate nahin naam***
> ***mere hari moko bhaje mai paon visrani.***

Nor do my lips move, not do I utter any name. The lord does my japa and I attain bliss.

Of course this saying of Sant Kabīr is from the point of view of a liberated soul whose consciousness is one with God. He attains estasy while the Lord takes over all this activites. This means that Kabīr and God are synonymous. This saying is in line with the Upaniṣad which say that, "Brahmavid Bhrama vai Bhavati". He who knows and attains the lord becomes the lord Himself. To attain such a state the injuctions of Sat Kabīr are:

Swas Swas me naam le, britha swas mat khoi
Na jane kehi swan awan hoi na hoi
Swasa ko kar sumirani ajapa ko kar Jaap
Param tatwa ko dhyan dharu soham ape aap.

That is, with each breath take the name of the lord do not waste the breath uselessly.

You do not know whether the next breath is going to be or not use the breath as a rosary and recite the Unutterable name of God meditate upon the Supreme reality.

And know that this reality as *soham sabda* resides in your own self.

It is clear that *satguru* Kabīr expounds the unbroken practice of mānasic Japa and the fixation of one's whole psyche on the self just as the *cakor* bird eyes are ever directed at the full moon. With such practice the vagries of the mind are checked, the wandering mind is brought to a focus and the "*dramatis personal*" which imprisons us in our petty ego disappears. The self is stripped bare, self knowledge dawns, all relativities cease, one reaches the other shore, that of immortality and of unalloyed bliss.

It is not within the ken of even the most brilliant mind to talk about the greatness of the name of the lord and concomitantly about the Nāma-Japa Yoga. This practice is the only purpose of our existence and without it all else is trouble. Even incarnated beings like Lord Ramachandraji cannot talk about it. They can only show the way to it. In the celebrated Rāmacarit·Mānas, Goswāmī Tulsīdās writes:

How shall I utter the greatness of Naam, even Rama himself cannot sing its praise Rāmayaṇa Balkāṇḍa 25/4
Greater than Rāma and Brahm is nāma, giveth its gifts and bestoweth its boons.

In another Chapai (quatrain) the same Goswāmī Tulsīdāsa declares:

In the very midst of miseries repeating the Rām Nāma, all pains are removed and one begets calmness.

Sat Puruṣ Kabīr in his inimitable ways declares in the *Tisa-Yantra* :

> ***Naam milave roop so jan khoji hoi***
> ***Jab waha roop hrday basse, kshudra rahe na koi.***

That is,

The name reveals its meaning and object to the person who is seeking earnestly when the form (of God) resides in the heart no other desires are left.

Brother Seeker, the world is only a passing show. We are deceptively dazzled by the phantoms of this illusory world, frantic are our efforts to clutch at them under a false sense of satisfaction. But we are ever tantalized in the fruition of our yearnings and later in the span of our earthly existence we shall feel a pang of regret for having wasted our precious time in seeking but shadows oblivious of reality. The Nāma-Japa-Yoga of Sat purus Kabīr and other genuine bonafide masters are a beacon of light to warn us about the pitfalls in the path of wordliness and self forgetfulness and thereby guide us on the safe path of spirituality. It is of paramount importance to undersand the urgency of the matter, as the great Buddha said centuries ago, the dangers of disease old age death is ever lurking at us, therefore no time is to be wasted. So, to the *Guru* who is the alchemist and the Name of the Lord which is mystical philosophers touchstone (Pārasmaṇi) surrender yourself unflinchingly in body, speech and mind to the repetition of the Lord's glorious name. Even if your wealth be lost, your body be hacked to pieces or even among the worst of predicaments, Sat Kabīr asks us to hold tenaciously to the *Nāma-Japam.*

One shall infailibly overcome all tribulations.

It is Nāma alone that can bring not only individual welfare but world harmony. It is the only true religion, without any kind of limitation and in the troubled-age in which we are living. Nāma is the only solution to our age-old suffering. In the *Bhagwad Gīta* Lord Kṛṣṇa rightly declares. that:

> "***Yaña Nāma Japay Yag Yosmi***
> ***Among all the Yajña (sacrifies) I am the Japjug Sacrifice***"[8]

Ācharya Parśurāma Chaturvedi Says :

> Sant Kabir must be without doubt listed among the great men of the world. He taught the right direction to the human society.

So this was the voice of Kabir, the social philosophy of Sad Guru, a world teacher (Guru) which echoed in Mauritius in a Kabirian International meet.

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13

SELECTED HYMNS OF KABĪR

(Selections from Bijak—
Ramaini, Sabda and Chaupāis)

Real God and False God

Kabīr ridicules gods and goddesses worshipped by the ignorant people. Brahmins are engaged in sinful acts. Their mythological books also misguide poor, illiterate Sūdras and working class. In his Ramainī he says :

"Badā so pāpī āhi gumānī |
Pāṣaṇda-rūpā chalō nala jñānī ||
bāvana rūpa chalo Bali rājā |
brahmana Kīnha Kauna ko Kājā ||1||
Branmana hi sabha kīnho cori |
brahmana hi ko lagala sori ||
brahmana kinho grantha Purana
kaisahu Kai mohi manusa jana ||2||
Eka se Brahma pantha calaya |
eka se hansa Gopalahim gaya ||
eka Simbhu pantha calaya |
Eka se bhute-preta mana laya ||3||
Eka se Piya Jaini vicara !
eka se Nihurī nimaja Gujara
koyi kahu ka kaha na mana |
jhutha sasama Kabīranhi Jana ||4||
Tana mana bhaji rahu more bhaktā |
śatta-Kabīra satta hai vaktā ||
āpuhi devā āpuhi pāti |
āpuhi kula āpu hai jātī ||5||

Sarva-bhūta saṁsāra nevāsī |
āphi ṣasama āpu suṣavāsī ||
kahaita mohi bhaila juga cārī |
kāke āge kahauṇ pukārī ||6||

Sākhī : Saṁchai koyī na manai, jhūṭhahi ke saṅga jāya|
jhuṭhahi jhūṭhā mili rahā, ahamaka ṣehā ṣāya ||7||"

Commenting on the *Ramaini,* Hajura Prakāśamaṇi—Nama Sāheb says:

He is a great sinner and egoist. He cheated the people intentionally assuming deceitful forms. Assuming the form Vāmana (a dwarf), he cheated the king Bali. The Brahmins have never worked for the welfare of others. ||1||

They were the Brahmins who committed the various acts of theft. Hence, the people blamed the Brahmins in all respects. The Brahmins composed the *Purāṇas* (books of mythology) so that the people may understand the Brahmins in one or the other way. ||2||

The respected Brahmā put the path of rituals in vogue, the respected Viṣṇu the path of devotion and the respected Śiva the path of *yoga.* A few pleased themselves with the worship of the disembodied spirits. ||3||

The Jains thought of idol-worship and the Muslims started saying Namāja bending on their knees. Out of all these, none listened to him who tried to prevent them from this. Consequently, the ignorant came to understand the false Master as the real Master.||4||

Oh dear ones! I advise do you worship the real Master with your body and soul inspite of all this. The turthful Kabīr is used to tell the truth. That Master Himself is the deity, the invitation card and the caste i.e. He is His pedigree and caste. ||5||

He resides in all embodied beings and in the entire world. He is the master of all and it is He who wells happily in all. I have been explaining this since four age. Before whom, should I shout now? ||6||

None accepts the truth. All join the untruth. The liars go hand in hand with the liars. It is true that the fools make futile attempts.||7||

(Bījak, pp. 49-51)

Ignorance—Cause of Suffering

Kabīr in his *Ramaini* (15) says that all misery is due to ignorance :

Vonayī badariyā parigau sāñjhā |
aguā bhūle bana-ṣanḍa māñjha |
piyā ante dhani ante rahayī |
caupari kāmari māthe gahayī ||1||

Sākhī:—Phulavā bhāra na lai sakai, kahai saśinha soṃ roya |
jyoṃ jyoṃ biñjai kāmarī, tyoṃ tyoṃ bhārī hoya ||2||

God lives in the bliss of His original natural while individual soul stays under ingnorance. A lady (soul) carries four folded blanket which becomes heavier when wet. So is soul when carrying Avidyā (ignorance on head). Hajara in his commentary says : The denseness of darkness in the form of ignorance spread every where. There is a *Bhajana* (a devotional song) which says, '*Māyā* is a coloured cloud in which the light of the moon is not seen'. This resulted in the setting in of the evening twilight i.e., the darkness set in. The Brahmā and others who led the way lost their way in the forest of the wrong impression.

(Bījak, pp. 51-52)

Secrets of Weaver God

Kabīr in his *Ramaini* (28) says that no body knows the secrets of the weaver the supreme, who has made this entire world, the whole universe :

Asa jolahā kāhu marama nā jānā |
jinha jaga ani pasarinhi tānā ||
dharatī ākāsa dou gāḍa ṣanāyā |
cāṁda saraja dou narī banāyā ||1||
Sahastra tāra le pūrani pūri |
ajahūṁ binai kaṭhina hai dūrī ||
kahaṁhiṁ Kabīr karama te jorī |
sūta-kusūta binai bhala Korī ||2||

Here Kabīr uses both Jalaha and Kori for weaver. The Supreme Weaver (Kori) is Good who has created the world, the individual soul is a small (Kori) weaver who does good and bad acts Commenting on the Ramaini Hajura Prakasamani—Nama Sāheb says : None understood the weaver in the form of the individual soul, the Supreme Soul and the Mind. One who has spread the warp in the form of the world made two ditches in the form of the earth and the sky for the working of the loom. He made the

spools of the sun and the moon i.e., of the two *Nāḍis Yīḍā* and Piṇgalā. ||1||

Moreover, a long shuttle (*purivā*) was filled with a thousand *kumbhakas*. Yet the task of knitting that fraudulent phenomenon is difficult and far off from achieving it. Kabīr Sāheb points out that the wrap of the fraudulent phenmenon is joined with the threads of works and the wear weaver in the form of an individual soul or in the form of the mind continues to knit the good as well as the bad yarn, i.e. goes on performing good as well as bad acts.

(Bījak, pp. 71-72)

Powerful Māyā

Kabīr in his mystic *Ramaini* (25) says that Māyā is all powerful, nobody can escape it in the world. He says :

Cauntisa acchara kā ihai viseṣā |
sahastroṃ nāma yahi mahaṃ dekhā ||
bhūli bhaṭaki nala phiri ghaṭa āyā |
hotā ajāna so sabhani gamāuā ||1||
Khojahiṃ Brahmā Visnu Śiva Śakti |
ananta loka khojahi bahu bhakti ||
khojahiṃ gani gadhrapa muni devā |
ananta loka khojahi bahu sevā ||2||
Sākhi : Jatī satī sabba khojahī, manahi na mānai hāri |
bada baḍa jīva na bāmchi hai, kahaṃhiṃ Kabīr pukāri ||3||

Commenting on this mystic *Ramaini Hajura* Saheb writes :

"This is the superiority of the thirty four letters of the alphabets that one finds many names in them. After transmigrating into many births (species), the soul returns to the human body and again it loses every thing due to its ignorance. ||1||

Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and *Śakti*—all these are in search of that Highest Essense. Over the above these, many others search it with great devotion. *Gaṇa, gandharvas* and even the deities are searching it. Added to all these, there are many others who occupy themselves with the same mission. ||2||

The yogis and the ideal women are busy doing that only. No body admits defeat in this respect. But Kabīr Sāheb declares at the top of his voice that the share of *Māyā* is such that even the great can not escape it. ||3||"

(Bījak, pp. 66-67)

Human Race is One

In his mystic *Ramaini* (26) Kabīr says that supreme creator himself created the world as a potter. The Human race is manifestation of God's creation. Kabir preches universal brotherhood through this verse. As he says :

Āpuhi karatā bhayā kulālā |
bahu bidhi bāsana gaḍhai kuṃbhārā ||
vidhane sabhai kīnha eka ṭhāūṃ |
aneka jatana ke bane kanāūṃ ||1||
Jaṭhara agina mahaṃ dīnha prajārī |
tā mahaṃ āpu bhaye pratipālī ||
bahuta jatana kai bāhari āyā |
taba Śiva Sakatī nāma dharāyā ||2||
Ghara ke suta jo hoya ayānā |
tāke saṅga na jāhi sayānā ||
sāñcī bāta kahauṃ maiṃ apanī |
bhayā divānā avara kā purī ||3||
Gupata pragaṭa hai ekai dūdhā |
kāke kahiye Brāhamana Sūdā ||
jhūṭhe garaba bhūlo mati koyī |
Himdū Turaka jhūtha kula doyī ||4||
Sākhi : Jinha yaha citra banāyiyā, sāṃcā so sutradhāri |
kahaṃhiṃ Kabīr teyī jana bhale |
jo citravantahi lehiṃ bicāri ||5||

Commenting on this verse, Hajura Sāheb says :

It is known to all that a potter fashions vessels of many kinds. At the beginning of creation the Creater Himself became a potter. Becoming Brahmā, he put all in place and after exerting Himself very much, he created vessels in the form of bodies of various kinds. ||1||

Putting them in the womb fire, he ripened them and protected them Himself. After that, they were taken out of the womb with great effort and were called women and men. ||2||

If a son of the wise parents is devoid of understanding, the parents do not become like him. I told the truth from my side yet you behave like a mad man on hearing others. ||3||

The race (Community) of the unmanifested as well as of the manifested is one and the same (human race). Hence, whom would

An Artist draws the picture, God has drawn this picture in the form of the world. ||5||

(Bījak, pp. 67-69)

Creation out of an Egg (Piṇḍa)

In his highly mystic verse, Ramaini (27) Kabīr traces the creation of the Universe from one 'egg'. He condemns all social prejudices and discriminations which are man made. As he says in his verse .

Brahmā ke dīnho brahamaṇḍā |
sāta dīpa ṇahumī nau khaṇḍā ||
satia satta kai Bisnu diṭhāyī |
tīni loka mahaṃ rāṣini jāyī ||1||

Liṅga rūpa tabo Saṃkara kīnhā |
dharatī ṣīli rasātala dīnhā ||
taba aṣṭaṅgī racī kumārī |
tīni loka mohini sabha jhārī ||2||

Dutīyā nāma Paravatī ko bhayaū |
taba karate Saṃkara kahaṃ diyaū ||
ekai puruṣa eka hai nārī
tate racina ṣāni bhau cārī ||3||

Saravana baramana deva vo dāsā |
raja yuna tamo guna dharati akāsā ||4||

Eka aṇḍa Oṃkārate |
sabha jaga bhayā pasāra ||
kahaṃhim Kabīra sabha nārī Rāma ke |
avicala Puruṣa bhatāra ||5||

In this Commentary of this *Ramaini* (27) Hajūra Sāheb Says :

"Brahmā was entrusted with the responsibility of creating *Brahmāṇḍa*. Consequently, he created the earth with seven islands and nine continents. Viṣṇū convinced his mother, the primeval, by explaining the truth to her. Hence, he obtained the charge of protecting the three worlds. ||1||

Śaṅkara arranged his body in the form of a phallus (liṅgaṃ) and he fixed the earth and the nether region. A beautiful maiden

having eight (perfect) limbs, the primeval (Prakṛti), was created. She infautuated the dwellers of all the three worlds with her beauty. (N. B. :—The following is the eight—fold prakṛti (nature)—earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect (*buddhi*) and the ego—thus my Nature is eight-fold". (*Gītā*). Though Prakṛti (nature) is without a beginning, yet its creation is mentioned through the creation of the parts (aṇagas) like earth and others). ||2||

Another maiden named Pāravatī came into existence. She was given (in marriage) to Śaṅkara who was practising penance. There is only one *Nirañjana Puruṣa* and there is only one *Nārī* (woman) of eight limbs. From these two, the four-fold creation (i.e., the creation of four categories of beings came into existence. (N. B. : The four categories are : Those (beings) born from eggs, those from bodies, those from sweat and those from the earth). ||3||

The Śarman, the Varmana the Deva and the Dāsa i.e., the Brahmins, the *Kṣatriyas*, the *Vaiśyas* and the *Śudras*, came into existence owing to the *Rajas*, *Satva* and *Tamas* constituents. The earth and the element Ākāśa also are the products of the three constituents mentioned above. ||4||

The entire universe was created from one egg which is in the form of "Aum : All the worshippers are the 'Wife' of Rāma and that Indestructible *Puruṣa* is their husband—so says Kabīr Sāheb. ||5||

(Bījak, pp. 69-70)

Self Realisation First, the Veda After

Even after reading scriptures the learned priests or paṇḍits do sinful acts. They have not found the absolute truth and still doubtful. Kabīr in his *Ramaini* (31) says that the study of *Vedas* is useless unless one has realised self. As says :

Sumriti āhi gunana kai cīnhā |
pāpa punya kai māraga kīnhā ||
smurita Beda paḍhaia asarārā |
pākhaṇḍa rūpa karai haṅkārā ||1||

Paḍhai Beda aura kare baḍāyī |
saṃsai gāṃṭhi ajahuṃ nahi jāyī ||
paḍhai sata se jīva vadha karayī |
mūṇḍī kāṭi agumana kai dharayī ||2||

Sākhi :

Kahahiṃ Kabīra yī pāṣaṇḍa bahuteka jīva satāva |
anubhau bhāva na darasai, jiyata na āpu laṣāva ||3||

Commenting on this *Ramaini* Hajura Saheb writes :— The books on law have enumerated the constitutens and have also shown the way to bad and good religious merits. Those, whose conduct is censurable and who press their point of view only, do study the books of Law (*Smṛti*) and the *Vedas*. In spite of this study, they become deceitful and proud. ||1||

These learned people study the *Vedas* and boast of their knowledge but the doubts are yet not dispelled from their hearts.

These people make offerings reciting the sacred incantations (*maṇtras*) and they lop off the head of the animal which is to be offered and present it to idol (of a deity). ||2||

Kabīr Sāheb says that these people, who incite others to make such offering, destory many living beings by practising this deceit. They do not see oneness of Self because they have not experienced the self-realisation during their life time. ||3||

Purport : The study of the *Vedas* and other scriptures is futile for those who are devoid of the self-realisation.

(Bījak, pp. 76-77)

True Knowledge

In this Ramaini (32) Kabīr emphasises the need of the true knowledge. For a fool *veda* has no meaning, so the mirror in the hands of a blind person. Kabīr says :

Andha so darapana Beda Purāna |
darabī kahā mahārasa Jānā ||
jasā sara canbana lādai bhāra |
parimala bāsa na jānu gaṃvāra ||1||
Kahaṃhiṃ Kabīra ṣojai asamānā |
so nā milā jo jāya abhimānā ||2||

In his commentary, Hajura Saheb writes :

"For the ignorant, the Vedas and the Purāṇas are like a mirror given in the hands of a blind person. These are like the mirror which is extremely faint for them. This means that it is futile to study them without the guidance of a real preceptor *i.e.*, "The ocean of the Vedas, if studied without the guidance of a real preceptor, tastes like salt (Vi. Sā). Just consider, how can a ladle, as spoon

can realise the taste of a sweet dish. An ass loads itself with the burden of the sandalwood but that idiot cannot smell the fragrance of the sandalwood.

Ignorant search highest soul (God) in Heaven but do not find that knowledge the self which could quell their ego."

(*Bījak*, pp. 77-78)

Caste Hypocracy

In this Ramaini (35) Kabīr says that Priest after studying the scriptures have forgotten their social obligations. It is questionable whether *Gāyatri* helped in anybody's salvation. The learned Paṇḍits are always full of arrogance of their scholarship which is of no use to the society. As he recites in his poem :

Paṇḍita bhulai paḍhi guni Bedā |
āpu apanāpau jāne na bhedā ||
sañjhā tarapaṅa au ṣaṭa karamā |
yī bahu rūpa karai asa dharmā ||1||

Gāyitrī juga cāri paḍhāyī |
pūchahu jāya mukuti kina pāyī ||
avara kai chiye leta hgau chīcā |
tumate kahahu kavana hai nīcā ||2||

Yī guna garaba karau adhikāyī |
adhikai garaba na hoya bhalāyī ||
āsu nama hai garaba prahā |
so kasa garabahi sakai sahārī ||3||

Sākhī : Kula marajādā khoya ke, khojini pada nirabāna |
aṅkura bīja nasāya ke, nala bhaye bidehī thāna ||4||

Commenting on the Ramaini (35) Hajura Parkaśamaṅinama Saheb says :

The learned forgot the Vedas after studying and cramming them because they did not get the idea of their own original prayers at twilight, the ceremony of satisfying the manes, the "group of six" and many other similar religious deeds (N. B. The six duties of the Brahmins are : study and teaching of the *Vedas*, offering of a sacrifice for themselves and for others, to give and receive the alms themselves) ||1||

The *gāyatri*-incantation is being muttered since a very long time but let us inquire if any one got emancipated by it. The idea conveyed is as follows: The mere muttering of this incantation without the purity of mind does not achieve the target i.e., emancipation. We ask the Brahmins, who are mainly instrumental in causing the cruelties like the killing of animals for the sacrifices, the following questions : on touching a member of a low caste, you sprinkle drops of water on your body with a view to purity it but who else is lover (more mean, more cruel) than you, the perparators of such acts of cruelty? ||2||

You are prouds of your caste inspite of causing such acts of violence. The excessive pride does good to none. How can that Lord whose very name is the destroyer of pride tolerate such a pride? ||3||

Those who have achieved emancipation after surrendering their vanity became merged with the Self on becoming devoid of desires. ||4||

A man becomes low or high by his acts only and not by his caste. Only caste hypocracy is responsible for sinful acts.

(Bījak, pp. 81-82)

Commercialisation of Religion

Kabīr in his *Ramaini* (36) declares that the clever priests have commercialized the religion, the true devotion and the path of realisation of God by creating religious sysmbols and language etc.

Kabīr says :

Gyānī cautura bicacchana loyī !
cka sayāna sayāna no hoyī ||
dosara sayāna ke marama na jānā |
utapati paralai raini bihānā ||1||
Bānija eka sabhani mili ṭhānā |
nema dharama sañjama Bhagavānā |
Hari asa Ṭhākura teji na jāyī |
bālani bhista gāvai dulahāyī ||2||

Sākhī : Kahū te nala kahāṃ gaye,
jinha dīnho guru ghoṃṭi |
Rāma nāma niju jāni ke,
chāṇḍi dehu bastu khoṭi ||3||

This Ramaini stands against all sorts of ritualism created by Priests. Hajura Saheb in his commentary says:

'Oh wise and clever men of sharp intellect ! the nondualists are not wise because the daulity, falling in the province of rivalry, is remembered (come to the mind) due to the statement regarding the non-dual Brahman. The dualists did not realise the essence. Hence, they are always busy with the cycle of creation and dissolution.' The traders of religion coming together had commercialisedin the path of realisation of supreme being.

(*Bījak*, p. 83)

On the Birth of a Brāhmaṇa

Kabīr in his *Ramaini* (62) says that Brahmin and Muslim priest all have been born out of their respective mother's stomach. More so everybody is born as Śūdra, then why this caste hypocracy. Only ignorant people boast of their caste. As he says :

Jo tuha karatā barana-bicārā |
janamata tīni-ḍāṇḍi anusārā ||
janamata sūdrā muye puni sūdā |
kritima-janeu ghāli jagadhandhā ||1||

Jo tuha Brāhamana babhanī ke jāyā |
avara rāha te kāhe na āyā ||
jo tuha Turaka turukanī ka jāya |
petahi kāhe na sunati karāyā ||2||

Kāri piarī duhahu gāyī |
tākara dūdha dehu bilagāyī ||
chāṃḍa kapaṭa nala adhika-sayānī |
kahaṃhi Kabīr bhaju Sālaṅgapānī ||3||

Commenting on this Ramaini, Hajura Sāheb says :

"On Brahmins! you are proud of your caste; it would have been far better if you were born along with *tridaṇḍa* i.e., "three staffs., 'tridaṇḍī' is considered to be of the highest caste. The fact is that a Brahmin is born as a *Śūdra* only at the time of his birth according to the scriptural statement which says 'a person is born as a '*Śūdra*'. A Brahmin again becomes a *Śūdra* after his death. [That man is called a true tridaṇḍi, in whose mind these three,

the control over his speech (vāgdaṇḍa), the control over his thoughts (manodaṇḍa) and the control over his body (kāyadaṇḍa) are firmly fixed.] By putting on your neck an artificial thread, the symbol of your initiation, you have commercialised the religion in the world //1//

O Brahmins! if you consider yourselves as the highest (up the social ladder) because you are born of Brahmin woman, why did you, then, not take your birth through the best part like the head of the body of your mother? O Muslims! if you consider yourselves as the true (lit. natural) Muslims because you are born of a Muslim woman, why did you, then, not come out from your mother's womb after getting the circumcisions performed there only. If this could have been done then you would have been called the true Muslims //2//

Please milk the black cows the yellow cows. Can you discriminate the milk cow-wise and point out which milk belong to which colour. This means that just as it is not possible to differentiate the milk of the black and yellow cow, in the same way, it is not possible to find out the caste of an unfamiliar person. On Men! give up our cleverness and deceits. Kabīr Sāheb asks every body to worship Rām, the holder of the bow. The idea is as follows: Rām, who holds *sāraṇga* i.e, the bow in his hands, crushes the ego of the egoists. (It is highly meaningful to remind the egoists of the invincible *Sāraṅgapānī Rāma*. Due to this meanigful adjuctive, the figure of speech called '*Parikara*' stands out prominently in this place. *Parikara* takes place on the strength of a meaningful adjective" (*Bhūṣaṇa*). Similarly, *Alaṅkāra Mañjūṣā* points out as follows. "The demons run away on seeing Hari with the (Sudarśana) disc in His hand. *Ghanaśyāma* (i.e., *Hari*) showers supreme joy, removes the afflictions and fills (all) with bliss". //3//"

Purport : A person who practises religion in his daily life is high while a person who practises the opposite of religion in his daily life is low. This is the only criterion for judging a person high or low. The birth in a particular caste is not the criterion.

(Bījak, pp. 120-122)

On Communal Harmony

Here Kabīr says that human race is one, upper and lower castes, Hindūs or Muslims they are all creations of one God. Hindū and Muslim priests are dividing the people. Kabīr says in his

Ramaini (63):

"Nānā rūpa barana eka kīnhā |
cari-barana boye kāhu na cīnhā ||
naṣṭa gaye jinha Veda baṣānā |
Veda paḍhai pai bheda na jānā ||
binalaṣa karai naina nahiṃ sūjhā |
bhayā ayāna taba kichuvo no būjhā ||2||

Nānā nāca nacāya ke, nācai naṭa ke bheṣa |
ghaṭa ghaṭa haiṃ avināsī, sunahu Takī tuma Seṣa ||3||"

Commenting on the *Ramaini* (63), Hajura Sāheb says :

"One God had created all men having different forms and having ego born of the caste-consciousness. Hence, it is a great offense against God to consider the God-made things worthless and to hate them. Moreover, none from all the four castes could understand that God who created all this. The idea is as follows : The caste of the four sons born of one common father should be one and this is consistent with the Religion of man. It is an agreed fact that a man can be high or low according to his constituents (*guṇas*) and deeds. Those who did not cultivate the sense of the universal brotherhood are destroyed by the fire of mutual hatred. Moreover, those who left the shelter of Rāma, the All-witnessing Over-Lord (lit. Sāhaba) and occupied their mind with many deceits, met their untimely end. ||1||

Those leftist, (i.e., those who differed from the right course of the traditonal religon) who interpreted the *Vedas* in the wrong way, had to resort to the hell and are thus lost.

They did study the Vedas but they failed to understand their deeper meaning. Moreover, the Muslim priest, who are fond of killing under the name of religion, close their eyes while killing the animals inspite of their belief in the presence of the Divine Light in the cows and such other animals and inspite of seeing that light in front of them. The fact is that the taste of the tongue has made them blind. It is true that an ignorant man does not understand any thing. ||2||

'Sheikh Taki! please listen. The Indestructible Sentient Supreme Soul (Puruṣa) is ever existent in every heart. That very Sentient

Supreme Soul assumes, like an actor, various forms owing to the limiting adjuncts. He himself dances and makes others to dance." God is in every heart. It means human race is one.

(*Bījak*, pp. 122-124)

On Fuitility of Ritualism

In this Sabda (4) Kabīr condemns idol-worship, which are made of either metal or stone and serve no purpose. All customs rituals, holy bath and religious symobls are to befool the people. Brahmin and Turuk both fight in the name of religion. If he says the truth, they are after him. Kabīr recites :

Santo deṣata jaga baurānā |
sāñcha kahauṃ tau mārana dhāvaiṃ,
jhūthahi jaga patiyānā ||1||

Nemī deṣā dharamī desā |
prāta karahiṃ asanānā ||
atama mārī paṣānahiṃ pūjai }
uni mahaṃ kichavu na gyānā ||2||

Bhutaka deṣā pīra avaliyā |
paḍhai kitaba Kurānā ||
kai murīda tatabīra batāvaī |
uni mahaṃ uhai to jyānā ||3||

Āsana māri dimbha dhari baiṭhe |
mana mahaṃ bahuta gumānā ||
Pitara pāthara pūjana lāge |
tīratha garaba bhulānā ||4||

Mālā phireṃ ṭopī phireṃ |
chāpa tilaka anumānā ||
sāṣi sabdi gāvata bhūle |
ātama ṣabari na jānā ||5||

Hindū kahaiṃ mohi Rāma piyārān |
Turuka kahaiṃ Rahimānā ||
āpusa mahaṃ dou lari lari mūye |
marama kāhu nahiṃ jānā ||6||

Ghara ghara mantara deta phiratu haiṃ |
mahima ke abhimānā ||
guru sahita sīṣa sabha būdai |
anta kāla pachitānā ||7||

Kahahiṃ Kabīra sunahu ho santo |
yi sabha bharama bhulānā ||
ketika kahauṃ kahā nahim mānaiṃ |
sahajai sahaja samānā ||8||

The learned Hajura Sāheb commenting on Kabīr's *Sabda* (4) says :

Oh saints! the people of the world went mad within no time. They rush to strike me down if I tell them the truth because the worldly people trust the untruth. ||1||

I have come across those who observe rules and regulations of religion and those who are religious. They take their bath early in the morning and kill the living animals such as goats, buffaloes and the like and worship the stones. They are absolutely devoid of the (real) knowledge. ||2||

I have also come across many holy Muslim saints (*Pīrs*) and the Muslim Fakirs who do not put on clothes (*auliyās*). These saints study the books on religion and the *Kurana* constantly. They initiate the disciples and show them the ways of sacrifice. Their knowledge is limited.

The false Hindū holy men (*Sādhus*) sit down at a fixed place and practise deciets. They are very much proud of the garb they put on. They make themselves busy with offering their worship to the idols made from brass and stones and get lost in the pride arising from their going to the various places of pilgrimage. ||4||

They put on necklaces and caps and brand their fore-heads according to the sect to which they belong. They get lost in singing the Sākhis and other poems of the same nature but do not cultivate acquintance with the Self. ||5||

The Hindūs contend that Rāma is dear to them while the Muslims contend that Rahīma is dear to them. Thus they quarrel among themselves but none of them knew the inner-meaning (the non-difference between Rāma and Rahīma). 'Friends! there are no two Gods of the world. Who led you to this wrong belief?' (*Bījak*). ||6||

Led by the pride of their (so-called) glory, they move from a house to ahouse initiating people to a particular cult with the

incantations (Mantra). Consequently, all the disciples along with their preceptors get drowned as they are devoid of the knowledge of the Self. Reprentence is their lot in the end. ||7||

Kabīr Sāheb says, 'Oh good men! please listen. All these are lost on account of the wrong impression (*bhrama*). How long should I preach to them? They do not follow my preaching. Hence, they get entangled in the "cycle of the eightly four" slowly and slowy.||8||

Purport :—The indiscriminating people, on account of their ignorance, hate the Sentient Soul and welcome the sentient objects.

(*Bījak*, pp. 175-177)

The Priests Misguide People

Kabīr in his Sabada (10) says that we have thoroughly seen the actions and behaviour of both *Hindū* and the *Turuk*. Both are ignorant. They follow their own rituals and customs and misguide the people. They do not know the ultimate Truth and for away from God. Kabīr in this Sabda declares fearlessly :

"Santo rāha duno hama dīṭha |
Hindū Turuka haṭā nahiṃ mānaiṃ'
Svāda sabhanhi ko mīṭhā ||1||
Hindū barata ekādasi sādhai,
dūha sighārā setī |
aṃna ko tyāgaiṃ manako no haṭakaiṃ,
pārana karai sagautī ||2||

Turuka rojā nīmāja gujāraiṃ,
bisamila bāṅga pukāraiṃ |
inakī bhiṣta kahānte hoyi haiṃ,
sāñjhiṃ muragī māraiṃ ||3||
Hindū ki dayā mehara Turukana kī,
donoṃ ghaṭa so tyāgī |
vai halāla vai jhaṭke mārai,
āgi dunau ghara lāgī ||4||
Hindū Turuka kī eka rāha hai,
sataguru yihai batāyī |
kahaṃhiṃ Kabīra sunahu ho santo,
Rāma na kaheu ṣudāyī ||5||"

Commenting on this Sabada (10), Hajura Sāheb writes :

On good men! We have examined both the views-those of the Hindūs as well as those of the Muslims. The Hindūs and the Muslims do not follow what they are forbidden to do because the taste of the tongue is sweet to all. ||1||

The Hindūs observe the fast on the eleventh day (of each of the two halves of hunnar month) and partake of milk and sweets. Thus, they give up the regular daily food but are unable to control their tongue. Hence, on the twelfth day i.e., on the day of breaking the fast, they eat non-vegetarian food at the end of the vow. In fact, the controlling of all the ten organs of sense and mind is the real 'Ekādasī'. ||2||

The Muslims observe a fast (*rojā*) and say their prayer (*namāja*). They kill a hen in the evening. How can they get the heaven? ||3||

The Hindūs as well as the Muslims have driven away the kind feelings from their heart. The Muslims kills, a goat by cutting it to pieces (*halāla*) while Hindūs kill it with a stoke. Thus, the houses of both of them have caught fire in the form of violence. ||4||

Truly speaking, there is only one common way for the Hindūs and the Muslims. A good preceptor (*guru*) has shown this very way. Kabīr Sāheb says, 'Oh saints! listen. The killing of the living beings had neither been ordained by Rāma nor by the very Khudā. If the *Hindūs* as well as the Muslims give up practising tyrannies, they will come to one common path. ||5||

Purport :—"Both i.e., the Hindūs as well as the Muslim are on the wrong track".

(*Bījak*, pp. 187-189)

One Humanity-One Human Race

Kabīr in his following Sabada (75) says that human race is one, but the priest have misguided the people in the name of caste; race and religion :

"Aiso bharama biguracanna bhārī
Beda Kitaba dīna auo dojaka
ko puruṣā ko nārī ||1||
Mānṭī ke ghaṭa sāja banāyā,
nāde bindu samānā |
ghata binasai kā nāma dharahuge,
ahamaka ṣojata bhulānā ||2||

Ekai tuca hāḍa mala mūtra,
eka rudhira eka gūdā |
eka būṅda soṃ siṣṭi kiyo hai,
ko Brāhmana ko Sūdā ||3||
Raja guna Brahmā tama svna Saṅkara,
satta gunā Hari soyī |
kahaṃhiṃ Kabīra Rāma rami rahiye,
Hindū Turuka na koyī ||4||"

Commenting on this *sabada* (75) Hajura Sāheb writes :

"The Individual Soul is so much fallen in the dreadful trap in the form of wrong impression that it desires to know what the Vedas are, what the Kurāna is what the religion (heaven) is, what the hell is, what a man is and what a woman is. ||1||

The earthen house in the form of a physical body is decorated in this way. The vital breath (Nāda-Prāṇa) is contained in the body in the form of semen (*Bindu*). What name will you give to the individual Soul on the destruction of the earthen pot in the form of a physical body? Really speaking, the fools have strayed from the path of truth. ||2||

Each physical body has the same skin, bones, excreta, urine, blood and the organs of senses. The entire creation has come out from one and the same drop (of semen). If this is the real state of affairs, then whom to call a Brahmin and whom to call a *Śūdra*? ||3||

In reality, the *Rajas*-dominated man is Brahmā because the Rajas constituent in active according to the principle 'and *Rajas* is active (mobile)'. The Tamas-dominated man is Saṅkara because the *Tamas* constituent is the dissolvent of all effects. Moreover, the *Sattva*-dominated man is *Hari* because the increase in knowledge, lustre, happiness etc. is due to the development of the Sattva constituent only. Kabīr Sāheb recommends to the people belonging to both the communities to realise 'Rāma' who is equally present in both the communities. The truth is that both the communities. The Hindūs as well as the Muslims—are man-made. 'From where did the Hindūs as well as the Muslims come? Who started this division (lit. way)?" The real community is one and that is the human race. The reason is as follows. 'That which is know from seeing the form (*akṛti*) is community'—(*Vārtika*).||4||"

(*Bījak*, pp. 323-324)

Self-Delusion

Kabīr in his following Sabada (76) says that individual soul is caught itself in the trap of Māyā, because of self-delusion. Citing examples Kabīr reminds :

Apana pau āpuhi bisarau |
jaise sunahā kāñca maṅdila mahaṃ,
bharama te hūṁsi moro ||1||
Jauṃ kehari bapu niraṣi kūpa-jala,
pratimā desi paro |
vaise hī gaja phaṭika silā para,
dasananhi āni aro ||2||
Marakaṭa mūṇṭhi svāda nahi bihurai,
ghara ghara raṭata phirau |
kahaṃhiṃ Kabīra lalanī ke suganā,
tohi kavane pakarau ||3||

In his commentary Hajura Sāheb says :

"This individual soul has forgotten itself by itself in the manner of a dog, who happening to enter a place of mirros, dies of contineous barking at its own reflections mistaking them to be real dogs. ||1||

The individual soul forgets itself in the manner of a lion who jumps into a well on seeing its own reflection there and in the manner of an elephant who makes repreated attacks with its tusks on the image in a marble slab and is exhausted. ||2||

The soul, due to forgetting its own nature, acts like a monkey wanders from house-to-house. Kabīr Sāheb asks, "O parrot resting on a bomboo pipe! who has held you?" The idea is as follows. Just as a parrot, resting on a bamboo-pipe, is caught in a trap, in the same way, this individual Soul is caught by itself only in the trap of *Māyā*. "It transmigrates itself by itself and liberates itself by itself from the worldy existence". ||3||

(Bījak, pp. 324-325)

On Animal Sacrifice

Kabīr was against killing of innocent animals for food. In his Sabada (83) he says that both Hindūs and Muslims who are meat eaters must be discouraged and condemned for this sinful deed. Muslims kill cow for religious purposes. In the Vedic times Āryan race believed in sacrifices during yajñas. Paṇḍits read Veda

and Maulana *Kuran*. But both have no pity on animals. He says in his verse :

Bhūlā ve ahamaka nādānā,
tuma haradama Rāmahiṃ nā jānā ||1||
Barabasa āni ke gāya pachārinhi,
garā kāṭi jiva āpu liyā |
jīyata jī muradā kari dārinhi.
tisako kahata halāla huvā ||2||
Jāhi māṁsu ko pāka khatu ho,
tākī utapati sunu bhāyī |
raja bīraja soṁ māṁsu upānī,
māṁsu napākī tuma ṣayī ||3||
Apanī deṣi karata nahiṃ ahamaka,
kahata hamāre baḍana Kiya |
usakī ṣūna tumhārī garadana,
jinha tumako upadesa diyā ||4||
Syāhī gayī saphedī āyī,
dila sapheda ajahūṃ na huvā,
rojā bāṅga nimāja kā kījai,
hujare bhītara paiṭhi muvā ||5||
Paṇḍita Beda Purāna paḍhatu haiṃ,
molonā paḍhahiṃ Kurānā |
kahaṃhiṃ Kabīra dou gaye naraka a mahaṃ,
jinhi haradama Rāmaḥiṃ nā Jānā ||6||

Commenting on the Sabda (83) Hajura Sāheb writes :

"Oh fool! oh senseless! you have forgotten your originality. Hence, you do not know Rāma who is present in each and every breath of all living beings. ||1||

Please consider the following. You lead a cow for the purpose of sacrificing her, you tie her legs and throw her forcible on the ground. You cut her throat and kill her. In this way, you turn a living cow into a carcase. You consider the cow, killed in such a way, holy. ||2||

Friends! please listen to the creation of that meat which you call holy. The meat is produced by Rajas and Semen. You eat that exceedingly impure meat. ||3||

(*Bījak*, pp. 336-337)

Departure from Kashi to Magahar

This Sābda was composed by the saint Kabīr on the eve of his departure from Kāśī to Magahar

Logā tumahīṃ mati ke bhorā |
jauṁ pānī pānī mahaṃ, miligau,
tyauṃ dhuri milai Kabīrā ||1||
Jo maiṁ ṭhīkauṃ sāñcāṃ Vyāsa,
tora marana ho Magahara pāsa ||2||
Magahara marai so gadahā hoya,
bhala paratīti Rama soṃ ṣoya ||3||
Magahara mare marana nahiṃ pāve,
anate mare to Rāma lajāve ||4||
Kā Kāsī ka Magahara ūsara,
hṛdaya Rāma basa morā ||5||

[A dialogue]

N.B. : It is learn that when Kabīr Sāheb was about to leave Kāśī for Magahara, he had a dialogue (a discussion) with a priest who was the resident of Mithilā. The present poem is suggestive of that discussion.

Commenting on this Sabada (103) Hajura Saheb says :

Kabīr Sāheb tells the people that they are simple minded because they maintain that the individual soul, at the time of death, returns to dust in the same manner in which water returns to water. The belief of those ignorant who hold that the body is the soul and that the individual soul also returns to the five great elements just as a physical body returns to the five great elements is based absolutely on wrong impression. ||1||

That priest (Vyāsa) says to Kabīr Sāheb, "Oh Kabīr Sāheb! at this moment of your departure from the salvation-giving Kāśī for Magahara, I, as a true priest, bring the following to your notice. You will surely die in the vicinity of Magahara only. A person who dies at Magahara is reborn as a donkey". (N. B. The word "Thikauṃ" belongs to the Maithili language). ||2||

The following interpretation is according to the other reading of the text (Jha). The other reading is as follows. "Jau" Mithilā ka sāñcā Vās/tauṁhi marana ho Magahara pāsa". Just as Mithilā is the dispensor of liberation on accout of its being the birth-place of the revered Jānakī, in the same way, even the forbidden region like Magadha, and others are the dispensors of liberation for the realised souls, Kabīr Sāheb retorts that the devotee of Rāma, who

holds that a person meeting his end at Magahara is reborn as a donkey, has completely lost his faith in the liberation-giving Rāma. ||3||

The wise (i.e. the realised) have their Self (*Ātman*) as Rāma. Hence they attain salvation even if they happen to die at a forbidden place. Therefore, they do not experience death again because the scriptures declare 'He does not return, he does not return'. 'That is my supreme abode from where they never return—(*Bh. Gītā*). If a devotee of Rāma, on hearing, the laudatory statement 'Kāśyāṃ maraṇānmuktiḥ' i.e. 'one attains liberation due to death at *Kāśī*, gives up his body in the regions such as Kāśī and the like, with the desire for liberration, it means that he considers Rāma inferior to the region concerned and thus belittles Rāma. ||4||

If 'Rāma' '*Sābha*' is the resident of my heart, all the places—the holy city of *Kāśī*, the forbidden Magahara, the barren land and others—are the same for me. "No matter whether one gives up his body at *Kāśī* or at the residence of a low-born person, one attains liberation the very moment the knowledge dawns." ||5||

If, I (*Kabīr*), give up my body at *Kāśī* out of desire for liberation then of what use will be the prayer and worship offered to Rāma, (*Sāhab*) by us? The idea is as follows : Kabīr Sāheb has no objection against the liberation attainable at *Kāśī*, but he is desirous of attaining liberation through his Rāma (*Nija-pada*). It is certainly open to those who take their seat at the door of Rāma (*Nij-pada*). 'Keep waiting patiently at the door of the Master putting up with the harsh treatment at the place becuase a day will certainly dawn when the Master "will shower His grace on the person sticking to the door."

(*Bījak*, pp. 379-381)

Vipramatisi or Voice of Revolt

Sunahu sabhani mili vipramatīsī
Hari binu būḍī nāva bharīsī |
Brāhmana hoke Brahma na jānaiṃ,
ghara mahaṃ jagya-pratigraha ānai ||1||

O friends! gather together and listen to the description of the bad mentality of the Brahmins of the *Kali* age. Their fully-loaded boat capsized in the absence of the devotion to God (*Harī*) i.e., their life, rich with the Vedic and other lores, was ruined on

account of their dirty acts. Even though they are Brahmins, they do not know Brahma, the Supporter of the universe. Moreover, they pocket the charity (dāna) given to them on sacrificial occasions. //1//

Purport : The attachment to the acceptance of charity is forbidden. //1//

N. B. : The present chapter deals with the befitting preaching to the Brāhmins, who are vain, who are ever-ready to commit the acts of killings and who are Brahmins in name only. Vipramatisi means an account of the mentality of the Brahmins mentioned above.

Je sirajā tehi nahiṃ pahicānaiṃ,
karama bharama le baithi baṣānaiṃ |
grahana amāvasa avara dūyījā
sāmtīpāmti prayojana pūjā //2//

Comm : They even do not know the Supreme Soul (God) who created them and they give discourses with ease on the cobweb of actions (*Karamas*). Added to this, they accept charities on the days of the eclipse, *amāvasa* [the last day of the dark half of a month (fortnight) according to the lunar calendar], second day of a month dedicated to *Yama* (*Yama dvitiyā*) and the like—the days which are forbidden for the acceptance of charities. They make their patrons (hosts) to perform the religious ceremonies (like *grahaśānti, punyāhavācana* etc) even on those forbidden days. Moreover, they make their patrons to perform the ceremonial worship (*Pūjā*) of even the lower (*tāmasi*) deities with a view to achieve their own selfish ends. //2//

Preta-kanaka muṣa antara bāsā,
āhuti-sahita homa kī āsā |
kula uttima jaga māṃhi kahāvaiṃ,
phiri phiri madhīma karma karāvaim //3//

Comm :— These Brahmins cause to put gold in the mouth of a person who is about to die. This is forbidden charity yet they accept it. On the top of this, they entertain a hope for full offerings at a sacrifice. They claim to belong to a noble pedigree yet they cause to perform the heinous acts of killing and the like only. //3//

Preta-kanaka = The ceremony concerning the giving of gold and the like as charity for the welfare of a dying person. It is reported that the soul of a person does not transmigrate to the

species of the evil spirits (*preta*) if gold is just put in the mouth of a dying person.

Sutadārā mili jūṭo ṣāyī,
Hari bhagatana kī chūti karāhīṃ, /
karama asauca uciṣṭā ṣāṃhīṃ,
mati bhariṣṭa Jamalokhaiṃ jāhīṃ ||4||

Comm : They take their meals in company of their wives and children from one and the same dish common to all of them and these members eat the food eaten and left out by one another. In spite of this, they observe untouchability with regards to the high-souled, God-devoted saints ! They cause to perform the impure ceremonies like the obsequeis and others and even participate in the ghost-feasts. Consequently, their mind is polluted. Hence they directly proceed to the region of *Yama*. *||4||*

Nahā ṣori uttima hoya āvaiṃ,
Visnu bhagata deṣe duṣa pāvaiṃ /
svāratha lāgi rahai bekājā,
nāma leta pāvaka jimi ḍāḍhā ||5||

But on their way back home, if they happen to come across a person of a low caste, they feel offended! They waste their time in trying to achieve their selfish ends. If this is pointed out to them, it causes heart-burning on their part. *||5||*

Rāma Krishna kī chodinhi āsā,
paḍhi guni bhaye krītama ke dāsā /
karama paḍhai karamahi ko dhāvaiṃ,
je pūche tehi karma diḍhāvai ||6||

Comm. : They have no hope at all the realising Rāma or Kṛṣṇa. They have become devoted to the formal rituals and the formal ceremonial worship of the insentient idols only inspite of their studying and mastering the lores pertaining to religion. They study the formal rituals and run after them. If some one seeks their guidance on this point, they manage to convince him of the utility of the rituals only and thus confirm his faith on them.

Nihakaramī kī nimdā kījai,
karama karai tāhī cita dījai /
aisī bhakti Bhagawaṃta kī lāvai,
Haranākusa ko pāntha calāvaiṃ ||7||

Comm. : "What precept and what prohibitory rule can there be for those who tread on the path which is free from the three constituents?"

Those high-souled great men remain detached from the rituals which are in the form of the precepts and prohibitory rules. These Bramins go on deriding such great men. They befriend those who perform the rituals such as sacrifices and the like. Moreover, they adopt such a type of worship of a deity that enables them to propagate the 'Tāmasa sect' (i.e., Kaul path, *Vāma Mārg* etc.)—the sect opposite to the established way to Truth. ||7||

Deṣahu sumati kera paragāsā,
binu abhi antara bhaye kiratama dāsā |
jāke pūje pāpa na ūḍai,
nāma sumiranī bhava mahaṃ būḍai ||8||

Comm : Look at the beauty of their understanding. They have become slaves of the unnatural and inanimate idols owing to the lack of discrimination. The sins cannot be destroyed by the ceremonial worship of such idols. Inspite of this fact, they drown themselves in the ocean of the mundane existence repeating the names of such idols. ||8||

Pāpa punya ke hāthe pāsā,
māri jagatra kā kīnha bināsā |
yī bahanī kula bahani kahāveṃ,
yī griha jāreṃ ūgriha māreṃ ||9||

Comm. : It is the birth right of the Brāhmins to prove any particular act as religious or otherwise! They are in complete command of the relgious/irreligious arrangement. They do or undo things according to their sweet will. They have 'ruined and destroyed the world' by putting religion in complete disorder due to their selfishness. They are called the benefactors of the family by performing such acts. The truth is that such people virtually destroy this word as well as the other world by such acts. ||9||

Baiṭhe te ghara sāhu kahāvaiṃ,
bhitara bheda mana musahi lagāvaiṁ |
aisī bidhi sura vipra bhanījai,
nāma leta pañcāsana dījai ||10||

Comm. : They sit at ease in their home and yet are called

'the highest'. They are waiting for an opportunity for cheating others. It is a matter of regret that those who practice such undesirable acts are called 'gods on earth' (*bhū-sūra*) and are offered special seats of honour immediately after they introduce themselves.

N. B. 'Pañcāsana' is a kind of sacrificial seat made of 'darbha' grass. ||10||

Būḍi gaye nahiṃ āpu sambhārā,
ūñca nīca hai maddhima bānī,
ekai pavana eka hai pānī ||11||

Comm. : They were so full of the ego born of their caste that they could not control themselves so much so that they thought of the high and low before paying their respect even to the high-souled saints.

(N.B. :—It is a custom in Mithilā that the Brāhmins do not pay their respect to the saints before inquiring about the caste of the saints concerned). Really speaking, to call a person high or low is the baseness of language as one and the same air and one and the same water are used in the creation of each and every being. Viewed from this point, the same material is used in the creation of all the beings, all are on equal footing. None is high. None is low. ||11||

Ekai maṭiyā eka kuṃbhāraā,
eka sabhanhi kā Sirajanihārā |
eka cāka sabha citra banāyā,
nāda binda ke madhya samāyā ||12||

Comm. : The Potter in the form of the Creator created the bodies of all beings from one and the same 'earth' in the form of five elements. Therefore, there is only one and the same creator for all the beings. He created the different pictures in the form of physical bodies on one and the same potter's wheel in the form of the round earth. Moreover, the same either and semen (Nādabimdu) are contained in each being. ||12||

Vyapi eka sakala kī joti,
nāma dhare kā kahiye bhoti |
rāchasa karanī deva kahāvaiṃ,
bāda karaim Gopāla na bhāvaiṃ ||13||

Comm. : One and the same Self-luminous Soul pervades each and every being. Hence could it be really called physical, conduct of these Brāhmins who cause injury to living beings is like that of the demons. In spite of such a conduct, they are called gods (on earth). God, the great father of each being, is never plased by this controversy of high and low pertaining to the castes. //13//

Haṁsa deha taji nyārā hoyī,
tākara jāti kahai dhauṃ koyī |
syāha sapheda ki rātā piyarā,
abarana barana ki tātā siyarā //14//

Comm. : Please point out the caste of the individual soul when it departs from a physical body. In the same way, please point out whether this individual soul is *Sūdra, Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya* or Vaiśya. Or please point out whether it has any colour. Moreover, please point out whether it is hot (living) or cold (dead). //14//

Hindū Turaka ki būdho bārā,
nāri puruṣa kā karahu bichārā
kahiye kāhi kahā nahim mānai,
dāsa Kabīra soyī pai jānai //15//

Comm. : In the same ways, please point out whether this individual soul is *Hindū* or *Muslim*, old or young'. Please point out whether it is man or a woman! Ṭhink about this also. Kabīr Sāheb says, "This is a positive truth but to whom could it be explained? No body obeys my words because the slaves of acts (*Karma-s*) consider their master (*Karma-act*) only as their benefactor". //15//

Bahā hai bahi jātā hai
kara gahe cahuṃ ora |
samujhāye samujhe nahīṃ,
dehu dhakā dyui aura //16//

Comm. : An ignorant person has been carried away in the river of the mundane existence in the days gone by and is being carried away even now. In spite of this, he catches hold of the straws in the form of false hopes for his protection. He does not undertsand the truth even if it is explained to him i.e. he does not give up false hopes and he clings to the act. Therefore, give him two additional 'pushes'.

Purport : If the mild policy is not successful in persuading a fool, the result should be observed by adopting a strong policy twice or thrice. //16//

(*Bījak*, pp. 425-4**)

** Here we have given only a very few selected hymns and Sabads of Kabir Saheb. From an ocean of nector how much one can drink and swallow, is a question worth million pounds said a western thinker. His every hymn is like a mirror in which we can see our face.

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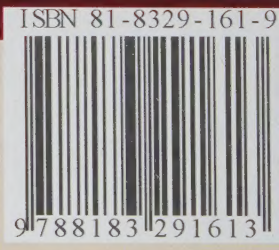
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